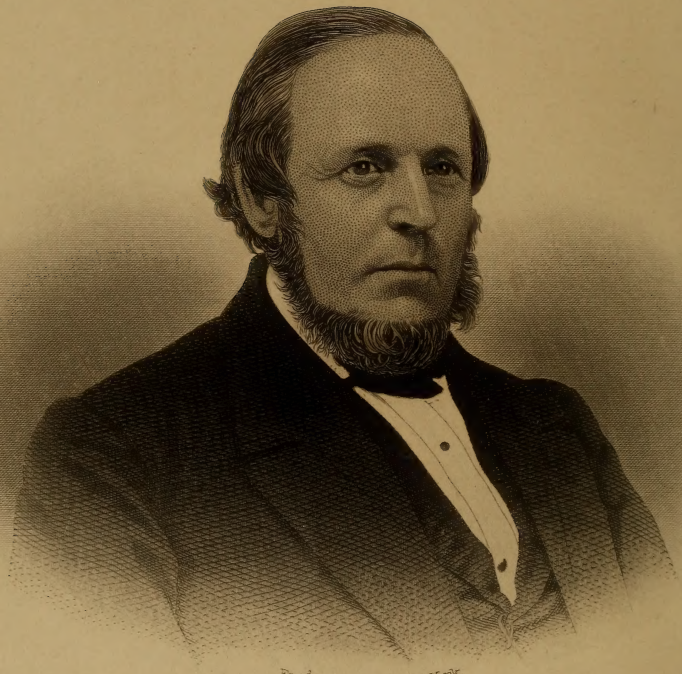

Engd by Geo. E. Perine, N. York.

Yours truly

Robert Boyd

# THE World's Hope

OR

# THE ROCK OF AGES

By Rev. ROBERT BOYD, D.D.

WITH BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR, BY REV. C. L. THOMPSON, D.D.

"*Which* HOPE *we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.*"—PAUL.
"*Lead me to the* ROCK *that is higher than I.*"—DAVID

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# DEDICATION.

*TO MY WIFE:*

*For nearly thirty years the loved and loving companion of my life; my faithful helper and co-worker in the healthy, active, and happy years of my public ministry; my constant, patient, and affectionate nurse in the years of my trial and suffering; and my always sympathizing and true-hearted wife,—this book is dedicated by her loving husband,*

THE AUTHOR.

# PREFACE.

In passing through life's journey, the people of God have often to sing with the poet Cowper,—

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform."

And happy are they who have learned to trust their Heavenly Father where they cannot see him; who can read his love in the most trying dispensations; who do not judge Him by feeble sense, but who know that when he blesses he does so like a God, making the things that seemed all against us work for our good; and so modifying the heat of the furnace of affliction, that instead of consuming us, as we feared, it only consumes our dross.

Hence there is nothing so wise, nothing so sweet for the Christian to do, as quietly to submit himself to the holy will of God. As a loving child puts his hand into his father's hand, and is led by him wherever he pleases, so should we trust our Father in heaven. He may lead us into a wilderness, or into a garden, by rough places or by smooth; but it will be found to be the right way, while He is our guide.

I have been led into these reflections by the sending forth of this new work from my pen, which opens the present volume. But a few years ago I was the pastor of a loving, faithful, and working church, in that most stirring and bustling city, Chicago. My congregation was large and attentive; conversions were frequent and numerous; I was happy in my work, and my time

occupied with it from morning to night. I had no time to write for the public, and never expected to be the author of books, but God laid his afflicting hand upon me, and paralysis left me almost as helpless as a child. Oh, it was a dark and trying day when I had to leave my loved work, and bid farewell to my dear people!

Determined to work as long as I could for my beloved Lord Jesus, I sent forth book after book which were well received by the Christian public. Soon communications began to reach me of the good they were doing. From the crowded city and the quiet village; from our patriot soldiers on the tented field, and from the hospitals filled with the wounded; from the pastors of churches, and teachers of Sabbath Schools, came frequent accounts of conversions through my writings. I now began to have a glimpse of the reason why God afflicted me. I found that I was addressing a much larger audience than I had ever done before, and that my affliction, so far from hindering, had greatly increased my usefulness. This was a great comfort to me, and caused the song of gratitude to God to ring out of the dark night of my trouble. The master had led me in a way that I knew not, and to Him I gave all the glory.

In conclusion, I wish the publishers of this, my latest and largest work, great success in sending forth this book on the great errand of preaching Christ; and I earnestly ask the prayers of the Christian reader, that the same may be abundantly blessed in leading souls to Jesus, the "World's Hope," and to build the fabric of their trust for eternity upon the "Rock of Ages."

R. B.

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# Biographical Sketch.

BY CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D.D.

The Rev. Robert Boyd, D.D., was born in Girvan, Ayrshire, Scotland, on the 24th day of August, 1816. His parents were devout and strict members of the Scottish Kirk. Their home was by the sea-shore, the beauty and grandeur of which made impressions on the mind of the boy, which were never effaced during the life of the man. In his autobiographic notes (from which largely the materials of this sketch have been drawn) he speaks thus of that early home:

"In front of the house was the great ocean, with only a grass-park between us and the beach. We could see the ships passing in great numbers almost every day going to and coming from the port of Greenock. Our house was at the end of the town, and behind it were cultivated fields, sloping away to high hills that seemed to be leaning against the sky. To climb those hills and lie down alone among the heather and gaze off upon the ocean stretching away till it seemed to meet the embrace of the bending sky, was one of my highest pleasures."

His thoughts were, from his very infancy, turned to the subject of religion. His father was an influential man in the Church, whose house was the resort of ministers and elders and other pious people. It was the boy's delight to sit by the fire of an evening, and listen to the conversations and discussions about religious truth and points of doctrine; and while much of these discussions sailed far above his head, profound impressions were thus early made upon his mind. The dawn of religious thoughts and feelings is thus referred to:

"As far back as my memory can go I had serious thoughts

of God and Eternity. One evening, in the calm twilight of the summer-time, I was lying on the grass in front of our house, gazing up into the dusky sky, when I began to see one star after another come out, and all at once a guilty dread of God took hold upon me. I felt as if the powerful arm of Jehovah was just about to be stretched out through the heavens to arrest me for the sins I had committed. I fled into the house in a perfect panic of fear and burying my head in my mother's lap, asked her to pray for me. I was five or six years of age at this time, and my dear mother was deeply affected by my words, having the general impression that for a child to show such feeling on the subject of religion was a sure proof that he was soon to die."

His religious education, as was the habit of the Scottish families of that day, was carefully attended to. He was taught to pray night and morning, to repeat the shorter catechism from beginning to end, to commit to memory Psalms and whole chapters of the Word of God. He also read many religious works with avidity, among which he mentions Pilgrim's Progress as having been a source of peculiar delight.

When about twelve years of age, the family removed to Glasgow. To leave his seaside home, and to exchange it for the noise and smoke and dust of a crowded city, was "the first great sorrow of his life." But for the beauty of nature he was now to have the better educational advantages of the city. The first part of that education was, however, perilous and was only by the grace of God prevented from being fatal. He fell in with reckless companions, who under plausible and attractive appearances hid corrupt lives and wicked hearts. His feet had well nigh slipped. The serious and pious thoughts of his early home took wing and fled away. The very form of prayer was neglected, the house of God was irregularly visited, the Sabbath was spent in rambles of pleasure, and as he expresses it, he was on the way to destruction with fearful rapidity. But God had a great work for him to do, and so in His great mercy interposed in his behalf and delivered him from

the snare to which he was hastening. The account of the change is given in his own words:

"When about fifteen years of age I went to hear an eloquent minister from England, who was preaching in John Street. His preaching was different from any thing I had ever heard. It was plain and pointed. It grappled close with the conscience, and best of all was full of Christ. It was so entirely new that my attention was arrested from the first sentence he uttered, and the Spirit of God carried the truth with power to my heart. I sought an interview with Mr. Ellensworth at the close of the service, and on subsequent occasions; and I trust was led to yield my heart up to Jesus. It is true I had but very imperfect conceptions of the plan of mercy, I lived much upon my own feelings and spent many very unprofitable hours in analyzing my emotions and trying to find comfort from looking inward at my own heart, instead of outward at Jesus. I had many seasons of discouragement when my feelings were not so warm and ardent as I thought they should be, when engaged in the Lord's service. Satan often tempted me to give up, for that I would surely bring a reproach on the cause of truth. I should have answered him as Catharine Bretterge did, when much tempted by the enemy, 'Reason not with me, I am but a weak woman, if thou hast any thing to say, say it to my Christ, he is my Advocate, my Strength and my Redeemer, and he shall plead for me.'"

He at once united with the Church, cut loose from his evil associates, found better company in a band of warm-hearted young Christians in the Church, and engaged actively with them in Christian service. He had not, however, attempted to speak or pray in public. His lips were opened in a singular way. He attended a debating school, at which one evening the Divinity of Christ was the subject under consideration. When he heard Jesus called a mere man, and remarks made derogatory to his glorious character, he found himself suddenly upon his feet, addressing the chairman. He was in a condition of absolute fright and panic when he realized his position and would gladly have retreated from the hundreds of

eyes that were fixed upon the boy. His extreme embarrassment roused the mirth of some who were near him, and that in its turn aroused the speaker, who went on earnestly and impetuously, though of course crudely to plead the Divinity of Christ. Perhaps that might be called his first sermon. From that time on he was prompt to take his part, as best as he could, in prayer-meetings, Sabbath-schools and mission stations. For some time he had been engaged in the double work of a student and teacher, attending classes during a part of the day and teaching during the remainder. A long sickness soon put an end to his student life. His recovery was slow, during which he read a large number of the works of the old divines—Erskine, Boston, Flavel, Baxter, Bunyan, Cameron, and others. The marks of that course of reading were impressed on his future life. The fruits of it appeared constantly in his preaching. He was a fuller, stronger, devouter man for that prolonged communion with the old masters in the days of his youth.

He now began to look forward to the life work to which his parents had early dedicated him, and which he had gladly chosen for himself—that of a minister of the Gospel. But there was severe discipline ahead of him before this hope could be realized. His father, a man of great strength of body, suddenly sickened and died. Robert was now thrown upon his own resources. His studies had to be given up, and he must needs seek some employment to meet the new responsibilities that were thrown upon him. The Temperance cause was then just beginning to attract attention. A Society had been formed in Glasgow, with Robert Kettle at its head, and this Society engaged him to go out through Scotland pleading their cause and establishing Temperance Societies. Properly accredited and full of enthusiasm he started out on his work. It was no easy mission. The Temperance cause was a new thing. Total Abstinence was regarded as a suspicious asceticism. The ministers for the most part stood aloof, or actively opposed it, many of the office bearers of the Church were engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks, and

the places of worship were often closed against the lecturer. Against these obstacles the youthful temperance advocate had to urge his way. He went from village to village—often on foot—held meetings every evening, often in the open air—and was the means of awakening an extensive and new interest in the cause. The Glasgow Committee were so well pleased with the results of his tour through Scotland, they sent him to Ireland in response to an earnest request from Irish Temperance Societies that a lecturer be sent them; and in the "green-isle" he also carried on a most aggressive and successful campaign. The Irish dignitaries were a little indignant at first that the Glasgow Committee should have sent a "mere boy" to them, but after the first meeting in Belfast they were quite content, and gave him through all his tour the heartiest of hearty Irish co-operation. The interest thus expressed and deepened in the Temperance work was never, through his life, absent from his heart, and was a conscious feature of his entire ministry.

After his return from Ireland he was engaged for a while in attending to his father's affairs and in doing city missionary work, as opportunity offered. This mission work was a great delight to him, and his fondness for anecdote and aptitude at illustration gave him ready access to the degraded population of the city. In the early part of 1839 he was induced by his Temperance friends to make a tour through the eastern part of Scotland, presenting his favorite theme. At this time we find him lecturing during the week and preaching on the Sabbath. Thus he passed through Kylsith (where a wonderful revival was then in progress), Falkirk, Bannockburn, Stirling and Doune. In the latter place his preaching on the Sabbath and during the week was blessed to a great awakening of the people. Many inquirers were seeking the way of life. He felt called to linger there and conduct the work thus providentially opened. For five or six months he was "abundant in labors," preaching, holding prayer meetings and visiting from house to house. One Sabbath after preaching he was invited by a farmer living a few miles from Doune to visit his neighborhood and hold service on some evening during the week. He

did so, and on retiring to his room, at the farmer's house, he found a book upon the table on "The Apostolic Commission," written by Rev. A. McLean, pastor of the 1st Baptist Church of Edinburgh. He turned to the chapter on Baptism. It was the beginning of an examination into the subject, which, after a number of days resulted in his believing that the principles and practices of Baptists were in closest accord with the Bible, and in his making application to the Baptist Church at Stirling to be received as a member. On the Sabbath following his application, he was to preach in the morning and be baptized in the afternoon. Going to Stirling on Friday he found the people in great distress, for the pastor of the Church had suddenly died the night before. Mr. Boyd supplied the pulpit for a few Sabbaths, when he was called to the pastorate, ordained to the solemn work of the ministry and installed as pastor of the Stirling Church. The Church was small, and moreover, divided over some Church quarrel. The first day he preached as pastor he was discouraged by the smallness of the audience. He resolved that there should be a different state of affairs in the evening. Accordingly, a little before time for service he took his stand at the center of the city, where several streets meet, and preaching there to within a few minutes of the time for the church service, he gave an invitation to all to follow him to the Baptist church. The place was crowded, and from that time on he had large congregations. By his prudent course internal dissensions, which had threatened the very life of the Church, were healed, and the Church grew by frequent conversions from the world.

Soon after his settling in Stirling, a Congregational minister came from Edinburgh to conduct a series of revival services. These meetings were blessed, not only in the conversion of souls, but in giving Christians clearer views of the fulness there is in Christ. Of this preaching Dr. Boyd says:

"It was to me like a new life, I had up to this time been living a good deal by my own frames and feelings—happy when I looked at Jesus—full of tormenting doubts when I looked at my own heart. I now saw Jesus as a perfect Savior;

that as the Lamb of God he had taken away my sins for ever, and that trusting alone in my gracious substitute I was perfectly justified before God and the law had nothing against me, all its claims having been satisfied. I now preached more of Christ than ever before. I did not like to preach a single sermon without explaining how a sinner can be saved. My heart condemned me if I did. I resolved to dedicate my life to holding up the Cross, and to telling my fellow-men the glad tidings that now thrilled my own heart. I have aimed at carrying out this purpose, but alas, how imperfectly has it been done."

These early religious experiences have thus been dwelt upon, because in them is the key to the success of his ministry. Those who knew him in his preaching, or his writings, can not fail to have noticed his singularly clear conception of the plan of salvation, and the unceasing fidelity with which he made it the center and circumference of all his sermons and his books.

On the 6th day of April, 1840, he was united in marriage to Miss Christina Forbes, and at once they set up their house at St. Ninians, a suburb of Stirling. His wife was like-minded with himself in the love and labors of the Gospel, his faithful friend and constant helper in the days of his activity, and his unwearied nurse and cheerful companion in the days of his suffering and waiting.

His ministry in Stirling was both a busy and successful one. He found special call there also for his temperance zeal. The Churches were so mixed up with the traffic in intoxicating liquors as to be the chief hindrances to the temperance cause. His own Church took advanced and decided ground, and their temperance activity was felt throughout the city. The pastor's work constantly overflowed the boundaries of his own congregation. Preaching stations were established at five or six points in various directions, over which he kept general supervision, and to which he sent lay members of the Church to teach and preach. One of these stations was at Castle Hill, the "Five Points" of Stirling. The people were visited from

house to house and encouraged to go to the place of the meeting. At first only a few degraded ones came to the door, and it looked as though the mission were likely to be a failure. But in answer to special prayer offered by the Church for that station, a great change took place. The hall was crowded, hard hearts were broken, and many sinners converted. About this time Mr. Boyd undertook a somewhat extensive evangelistic tour through towns and villages around Edinburgh. But the strain of these multiplied labors began to tell upon his health. Nervous days and sleepless nights, the beginning of years of discouragement and suffering, pressed upon his attention the necessity for rest. In company with his beloved friend and deacon, John Robertson, he went first to the seashore, and afterward to Edinburgh and other places, in the hope of fully regaining his health; but it continued to decline. His mind was turned to America. A sea voyage, it was thought, would be greatly beneficial. The decision was soon reached. He resigned his Church and made ready for his journey. The parting was full of pain. Strong affection bound him to his people, and ardent devotion held him to a work which seemed but fairly begun, and had to be surrendered. He says:

"On the fourth day of August, 1843, we took an early departure from Stirling, looking with indescribable feelings upon each familiar spot, till the spires of the churches, the battlements of the old Castle, faded from our sight. We had many friends to part from, and also a dear little grave containing the precious remains of our second child. We knew that dear Christina, our sweet little flower, was blooming in Heaven; but nature demanded the tribute of tears. Mary, our oldest, we had with us, to cheer us by her prattle, but too young to form any idea of the vast results depending on the change we were now making. At Glasgow we were detained for a few days, and on the tenth of August we set sail in the Margaret Paynter for Montreal. It was a day of solemn feeling to me as we passed along the river and at last plunged forth into the expanding ocean. Night began to gather her dark curtain

around us, and, gazing through the fast-coming gloom, we bade our native land farewell."

The seclusion of the long sea voyage gave opportunity for meditation and seeking a new preparation for the work that lay before him. His journal for that time indicates the close communion with God during those days, and the great longing which filled him that he might live more and more to the Divine Glory. During that voyage he made a covenant with the Lord, and recorded it in his journal. It is as follows:

"September 4th. I desire here, while upon the great deep and before reaching the land where, if spared, I mean to devote myself to God's work, solemnly to make the following covenant with my Heavenly Father:

"Oh, my God! I had sold myself to sin and was enslaved by Satan and the present evil world. Thou hast redeemed me and at Thy footstool I bow myself in love and gratitude. Other lords have had dominion over me, but from henceforth I desire to be called only by Thy name. Whatever Thou choosest me to be, to have, to want, to do, or to suffer, I cheerfully acquiesce in Thy wise and righteous appointment. Oh, instruct me to know Thy will, and assist me to do it. Oh, my Father! I join myself to Thee, in a perpetual covenant, never, I trust, to be forgotten. I had rather be a door-keeper in Thy house, oh, my God! than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Let me but feel Thy supporting hand, hear Thy gracious voice and see Thy smiling countenance, and I can go on my way rejoicing. Oh, thou Prince of Life! receive a poor worthless sinner. Thou only art my Master, my Guide, my Deliverer, my Portion! May I never—no, never—deny or dishonor Thee. Take Thou possession of my soul; turn out every rival, and reign over all my affections with undisputed authority.'

On the 25th of September they landed at Montreal. They were met and cordially received by the pastor of the Baptist Church and other Christian friends, and the way for work was promptly opened to the zealous young minister. Thomas Smart, Esq., of Brockville, was at that time in Montreal, who

suggested to Mr. Boyd that he accompany him home, especially as a Baptist Association was to meet near Brockville that week. The invitation was accepted, and Mr Boyd soon found himself in the presence of the Association at Augusta. He describes it as composed of ministers, for the most part without education, but full of zeal and self-denying labors. He was at once invited to preach, and then as promptly engaged as a missionary among the weak Churches, and to carry the Gospel into the most destitute parts of the country. This was just what he wanted. He had great delight in laying foundations and building up new Churches—to use his own words, "instead of looking for a place, to make one."

For a time the little family began housekeeping at Farmersville, a village central to his work. The people among whom their lot was thus cast were poor, and living in primitive ways; but they were kind and hospitable beyond measure. But the missionary life was not to be long continued.

Brockville, on the St. Lawrence, had no Baptist Church. Mr. Boyd preached there on a certain Sabbath, and again on the following evening. So marked were the signs of deep spiritual interest it was resolved to go on with a series of special services. For months the revival went on with great power and many souls were converted. A council was called and a Church organized. Mr. Boyd received and accepted a call to become the pastor. During the Winter of 1844 the services were held in the old court house, which soon became too small for the rapidly increasing congregation. During the Summer services were held in the open air, in a grove on the banks of the river. In these services a new class of hearers was reached, those who had never gone into a church, hovered at first around the edges of these out-door congregations, and in many cases were convicted by the Spirit and brought into the fellowship of the Church. In the Fall a stone church was erected, and on the 27th of October it was dedicated to the worship of God. Early in his ministry in Brockville he began that overflow missionary labor, which had made his work so successful in Stirling.

Preaching stations were opened in different directions, and on week-day evenings he gathered the people in them to hear the message of the Gospel. These multiplied labors, however, were telling upon his physical strength. He records his conviction of their unwisdom, and in his late years looked back on his course in this respect with profound regret. The excessive drain upon his strength was further increased by missionary tours into remote districts, which, however good in their results, were costing the young minister too severely, by shortening the years of his service. Yet who shall say, that in the higher measurements of heaven, those swift, intense years were not every way better than slower years in more barren labors dragged out to man's fullest limit of days? For eternity, doubtless, will gather vast results from those journeys. Revivals in Breadalbane, Augusta, Farmersville and other places were the manifest tokens of Divine favor—the satisfying Divine reward. In one of those revivals, in a community largely given to Universalism, there occurred the remarkable conversion of the leading hotel-keeper, himself a Universalist. Mr. Boyd says:

"He showed a good deal of skill and plausibility in advocating his views. Being a young man himself he had great influence over the young. He attended night after night, showing much solemn attention. One night I went home with him, having learned he had expressed a wish that I would do so. The next evening he stood up and asked the prayers of God's people, and then came a rush of young men, whom he had been keeping back. Oh, how much evil one sinner can do! The next morning he went into his bar-room and his customers began to gather in, but he shrank with horror from the idea of selling them any more liquor. He felt that, as a Christian man, he could not do it. He had his barrels rolled out into the street, and giving me an axe, requested me to spill their contents into the gutter. It was done, and I addressed a large crowd assembled to see the strange sight. I then announced a prayer-meeting for the evening in the ball-room, where so much evil had been done in former times. Oh, how

solemn that meeting was! Surely none there can ever forget it. The result of this meeting was very good over all that region of country. It gave moral laborers a new encouragement in their work of reform, and especially did it magnify and honor in the sight of all the power of prayer. A large number were added to the Church, including young and old. Backsliders also were restored, and a general quickening into life was manifested by all religious people."

After a pastorate of nearly seven years in Brockville Mr. Boyd was called to the Baptist Church in London, Upper Canada, a call which, on consideration, he concluded it his duty to accept. He began his work in London in October, 1849. The Church at that time had no place of worship of its own; but were holding services in an old Methodist church. During the first Winter they were blessed with a gracious revival of religion. A large number of young men were converted, and the Church was greatly strengthened. In the Spring the old church having become too small, and withal, insecure, steps were taken to erect a new house of worship. They entered it just one year from the day Mr. Boyd began his ministry in London. Prosperity attended the Church—inquiry meetings (which it was the habit of Mr. Boyd to hold every Monday evening) were well attended, and conversions were frequent. Things thus went on for nearly five years; each year filled up with abounding labors, in the pulpit, in the temperance work, on the platform for various benevolent causes, and in visitation from house to house. In the early part of 1854 the spinal disease from which he had suffered in Scotland returned with an increase of painful symptoms warning, but too plainly, that the overtaxed energies must have rest. At this time a proposal came to hand from the Baptist Church in Hamilton. They would be contented with one sermon a day, he could be relieved from the pressure of all extra work, and it was hoped this partial rest would be sufficient to work the restoration of his health. So, amid many expressions of affection and regret, he sundered the ties that bound him to the people of London, and removed to Hamilton. But the experi-

ment proved a failure. His health was steadily failing, and after remaining there till November, he took his family and removed to Waterville, Waukesha Co., Wis., his medical advisers telling him that he must take at least a year's rest from all mental labor. Mrs. Boyd's father had died a short time before, and left them a small farm, which was just the refuge that was needed at the time. The following extract from a letter acquainting a friend with their arrival at their new home, gives an insight into the darkness of that day:

"The cars left us at a small way station, late at night, and as I stood there, surrounded with my family and my trunks, and remembered that I was so far from my dear friends in Canada, whom perhaps I was never to see again, and that I was laid aside from my loved work of preaching the Gospel, it might be never to be able to resume it again, there came over my mind such a dark cloud of depression as I never felt before. It was not a feeling of common regret or sorrow that often finds relief in tears, but a black horror that can not be put into words. I prayed for deliverance from the temptation, for such it doubtless was, and knew something of the experience of the Psalmist when he said, 'Lord, from the depths to Thee I cried.'"

For about ten months he had entire rest. It could hardly be said he enjoyed it, for imperatively needed as the rest was, his enjoyment was always found in his work. The Baptist Church in Waukesha, Wis., being vacant, invited him to preach for them. It being only about ten miles from his farm, he would drive in on Saturday evening, preach on Sabbath, and go back again on Monday. But when the Winter came, even this partial rest was exchanged for the full labors of the pastorate.

He removed his family to Waukesha that he might give himself fully to the service of a Church, which, having been torn asunder by difficulties of long standing, was in peculiar need of pastoral counsel and care. His brief ministry there was greatly blessed to the healing of strife and the strengthening of the congregation. His health also improved, and

he was happy again in the glorious privileges of preaching the Gospel.

In the Spring of 1856 he made a visit to some friends in Chicago, preaching on the Sabbath in the 1st Baptist church. A number of members of this Church had for some time contemplated the organization of a new Church in the southern part of the rapidly growing city; and so impressed were they with Mr. Boyd's preaching, they felt if he could be secured to lead the new enterprise the time was ripe for its inauguration. Accordingly a meeting was called, a Church organized, and a committee appointed to secure a lot and funds for the erection of a building, and a call made out for the services of Mr. Boyd. With genuine Chicago spirit a lot was bought on the very next morning, and in a few days the money was raised for a suitable building. In the early part of September Mr. Boyd moved to Chicago, and began his work with meetings for prayer in the lecture room, the audience room being not yet completed. At the very first meeting prayer was asked for one inquiring soul. The church was dedicated on the first Sabbath of October, with very impressive services, in the presence of a congregation that completely filled the house, and in the afternoon of that day an incident occurred very encouraging to the pastor. It is given in his own words:

"A gentleman called to see me, who had been led to see himself a sinner under the forenoon sermon. That night he found peace in believing, and became a consistent member of the Church till the day of his death. This token for good strengthened my faith, and led me to go forward in seeking to have conversions all the time. I wanted to train this new Church to look for and pray for good being done under the common means of grace, at the same time that they kept praying for and laboring for a revival. And in a great measure this was accomplished, for though we were favored with several powerful revivals, yet every month under the common means souls were converted and added to the Church during the whole of my pastorate of nearly eight years. God says, 'According to thy faith be it done unto thee.' If we look for

souls to be saved only when we have a protracted meeting we are casting dishonor on the ordinary means of Divine appointment, and fixing upon the minds of men a most dangerous impression."

Alluding to some of the discouragements of these days of small things in the young Church, he refers thus to the spirit of harmony and prayer that marked the little band:

"But I hope I was driven to greater trust in God by these discouragements. I had attended only a few prayer-meetings when I found I had some noble praying people to hold up my hands. From the first we were blessed with wise, kind, earnest and faithful deacons. In all important matters these dear brethren not only consulted with me, but we poured out our souls together in prayer to God, and many an answer from heaven was obtained in my little study. We were all united in heart, all aiming at one object, and we had meetings we can never forget; they were the very type of heaven itself. During the continuance of the financial panic we had large payments to make in order to sustain the honor of the Church. Often we did not know where the money was to come from, but we poured out our souls in prayer, and in a wonderful way the sum needed would be provided."

In the Fall of 1857 the great revival that was spreading through the country visited Chicago with great power. Thousands flocked to the noon-day prayer-meetings at Metropolitan Hall, and great numbers were inquiring the way to Christ. Mr. Boyd took a very active interest in this work, and preached in his church on Sabbath evenings a course of sermons on the Plan of Salvation, which were largely attended and greatly blessed. Upon no subject was he so much at home, to none did he recur with such frequent—we might almost say, constant repetition and such unbounded delight. And it is the testimony of all who have heard him, that in this respect he was a prince among preachers. Very few men have possessed so clear a conception of the way to be saved, have realized its paramount importance so vividly, and have preached it with such simplicity, fervency and power.

The interest in the congregation now became so great that meetings were held every evening for several months, and during part of the time a prayer-meeting every morning. Referring to this time he says, "It was the happiest time of my life. The Spirit of God was so manifestly in the work, the cases of conversion were so marked and satisfactory, the Christians were so active and spontaneous in their efforts to do good, and it seemed so easy and pleasant to preach, that it lives in my memory as the brightest spot in my ministry. As my days were occupied I did not have much time to study for these evening services. There was the morning prayer-meeting to attend, as also the noon meeting. The afternoon was spent in visiting. After tea I entered my study and read and meditated upon a porition of God's Word from which I would speak at the evening service for about twenty minutes. Then the brethren would speak and pray, and the young converts bear testimony to the power of the Gospel, which was a powerful sermon in itself. We did not keep the meetings late, so that the people did not get worn out, and there was no unhealthy reaction. Oh, it was a glorious season of refreshing, and seemed like a 'heaven on earth.'"

Speaking of his labors at this time, he says: "My people were greatly scattered over the city, and visiting them was laborious, and took up a great deal of my time, but I was everywhere received with so much affection and so much did I see my dear people grow in grace and in a knowledge of the simplicity of Gospel truth that I was the happiest of men, and toil was a pleasure in their service. I loved my work, and did not wish to exchange it; not for the highest and richest position within the gift of the world. I could enter into the feelings of the Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, when he said, 'I would gladly beg my bread for six days of the week rather than be denied the privilege of preaching the Gospel on the Sabbath.'"

But these joyful strains were soon to sink to a minor key. His excessive labors were paving the way for the bad symptoms he had previously felt, and which were now coming back in more

serious and menacing forms. A weakness and trembling of the lower limbs warned him of coming paralysis. He kept on with his work for a time, but finally, under the advice of physicians, consented to leave his flock for a few months and seek rest and medical treatment at the Water Cure near Cleveland. The three months spent there improved his general health, but the lameness continued and grew worse. He therefore returned to his home and resumed his labors as far as he was able. His pastoral work could be performed only with greatest difficulty. He preached with all his customary vigor and fire, but was subject to great exhaustion and suffering afterward. The Church continued to grow, and in 1861, under the pressure of the evident need of more room, it was resolved to remove farther south, and enlarge the building. A lot was selected on Wabash Avenue, at the corner of Eighteenth Street. The building was moved to it and enlarged and beautified, and was occupied by the rejoicing congregation in October, 1862. About this time the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred on Mr. Boyd, by Shurtleff College, at Alton, Ill.

In the early part of that Winter, there were such marked tokens of the presence of the Spirit among the people, a series of special meetings was resolved upon, and, Dr. Boyd being now too feeble to bear the brunt of them himself, the well-known evangelist, Jacob Knapp, was secured for the work. A large number were added to the Church at this time, mostly young people. The membership was revived and roused to greater activity, and the attention of the people called to the new place of worship. The result was that the enlarged house was again well filled.

At this time the Church was engaged in a broad diversity of labors. Their young people's meetings (to which the pastor gave special attention) were full of interest. A flourishing mission was sustained on Liberty Street, and much special mission work was done among the thousands of Confederate prisoners at that time confined in Camp Douglas Barracks.

About this time a new field of influences was opened for Dr. Boyd. Unable on account of his increasing lameness to go

much from home, he began to use his pen in the public press. He became a regular contributor to what was then the "*Christian Times*," now "*The Standard*." His contributions at once attracted attention. A series of articles on his favorite theme, The Plan of Salvation, were extensively copied and widely read. In the Spring of 1860 he published a little book, called "Glad Tidings," which was warmly received and had an extensive sale. It was becoming painfully evident to him now that his days of preaching were drawing to a close, and he hailed therefore with thankful delight the prospect of being able still to serve his master by the use of his pen. To him, sitting under the shadow of the great fear that at any day he might be disabled from ever again entering the pulpit, the news that now came to him of the blessing that little book was bringing to many hearts, was peculiarly comforting. Letters came from different parts of the country and from the lines of the army, bearing glad tidings of souls awakened or helped by reading the Gospel he had sent out through the press. Knowledge of this kind coming to him prompted him to give himself more fully to the work of writing the messages he would not much longer be able to speak.

He, however, kept on preaching, but with increasing difficulty and distress. He now became so helpless that he could no longer stand up in the pulpit. A high chair was procured, and in this he was carried from the parsonage to the pulpit, and, sitting in it, preached oftentimes with as much force and persuasive power as ever in his life; for, by a gracious Providence, the disease which was rendering his body helpless did not touch his mind. But in the Fall of 1863, his health had become so much impaired, and the paralysis in his lower limbs had so increased, he began to think of resigning his charge. This was probably the hardest step of his life; but feeling that justice to the Church required that they should have a minister who could do pastoral work, he sent in his resignation and preached his farewell sermon. Referring to this time, he says:

"Those were the darkest and most sorrowful days of my life. Before this, on several occasions, I had left Churches

that I loved tenderly, dearly; but it was to go to another field of labor that promised greater usefulness. But now I seemed to be taking farewell, not only of this dear Church, but of the ministry also; for I never expected to be able to preach again. The Lord had brought me into a large field of usefulness, and now I was laid aside a poor helpless invalid, without means, and a large family dependent upon me. It was indeed a solemn and mysterious providence. I groped in darkness, and could see no light. I felt confident that God was with me, that He was my friend and would surely provide for me and mine. But His design in all this I could not comprehend. That it was all in love, I was well assured, and I felt that my duty at present was explained in the injunction: 'Be still, and know that I am God.'"

*The Christian Times* referred to Dr. Boyd's farewell sermon as follows

"The last Sabbath was a day of sad but surpassing interest at the Wabash Avenue Baptist Church. The pastor, Rev. Dr. Boyd, on that occasion severed his connection with the Church which for nearly eight years had enjoyed his ministry, and under that ministry had grown from fifteen to two hundred and sixty-three members. The event was evidently one of general interest to the citizens of Chicago, as we noticed in the crowded assembly numbers of persons who are not Baptists. In the course of the sermon Dr. Boyd alluded to the satisfaction he had found in his ministry. His references to his connection with the Wabash Avenue Church were very touching, and all felt them to be most true. There had been, he said, perfect harmony from the beginning between himself and the Church, and among the members. He had never had from any one of them an unkind word or even look. There had never been in a meeting of the Church a single angry utterance, a single jar. He had enjoyed all co-operation and support. He had had the tenderest sympathy in his bodily affliction, kindly allowance for all his infirmities, and considerate attention to all his wants. His salary had always been promptly paid on the day it was due. There were many in the

audience who could have testified that this harmonious, united and efficient spirit in the Church had been largely cultivated through the pastor's own influence, both as felt in his eminently spiritual preaching and in his daily intercourse with his flock.

"Feeling there was so much reason to regard his stated ministry as finished, Dr. Boyd referred briefly to the twenty-seven years he had served as pastor, and to the results. He had preached in that time upwards of eleven thousand sermons, besides numerous addresses and lectures. He had officiated at six hundred funerals, married five hundred persons, and baptized with his own hands eight hundred and sixty-nine. We think to these should be added those who during the last few years have received the ordinance at the hands of his brethren, though converted under his ministry. This would swell the number to over nine hundred. During his ministry in Chicago, four hundred members have been added to the Church, eleven hundred sermons have been preached, two hundred and twenty funerals attended. and one hundred and seventy persons married by him."

The Church adopted a series of resolutions expressing the deep sense of their loss, their sympathy with their pastor, their grateful appreciation of his work, and their assurances of continued love. They also raised a subscription of three thousand dollars as a substantial testimonial of their interest and affection.

In considering the place for a future home, it seemed best on several accounts that Waukesha should be chosen. Preparations were therefore made for this removal. The last Sabbath spent in Chicago was most memorable. Dr. Boyd was carried into the church, and sat in front of the pulpit while the congregation passed in a long procession, bidding him farewell. There was not a dry eye in the house, and when the long farewell was over, Dr. Boyd had to be taken to bed — quite overpowered with the tremendous strain upon his feelings.

He went to Waukesha, little expecting that he would ever be able to enter a pulpit again. After several months of rest,

he found his health so much improved that, on the Baptist Church being left without a pastor, he consented to preach for them once every Sabbath. Very few men in his condition would have thought themselves able to endure the fatigue and excitement of preaching; but no suffering could abate his passion for his work. Carried to his pulpit, and sitting in a chair, he had the happiness of again proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel. The word was spoken in bodily weakness and pain, but with the old-time intellectual power and spiritual fervor. The congregations increased so much as to render an enlargement of the church necessary, and, in the Winter of 1866–7, they enjoyed a gracious revival of religion, by which about forty persons were added to the Church. Many of the cases of conversion were of marked interest and displayed remarkably the great power of God. In the Summer of 1867 a series of out-door union services were inaugurated in the village, for the purpose of reaching the non-church-going people. Dr. Boyd preached the opening and closing sermons of the series, sitting in a buggy around which the audience was clustered. Never able to refuse an invitation to preach, on the 7th of September, after preaching as usual in the morning, he acceded to an urgent call to go to Pewaukee, a village about six miles distant, and hold an open-air service in the afternoon. He preached to a large audience from the text, "What shall I do to be saved?" little thinking that he was preaching his last sermon. He preached with an unction and earnestness that could hardly have been deeper, had he known it to be his last spoken message. He rode home in the chill of the evening, caught a severe cold, and the next day was taken down with inflammation of the spine. For many days he hung between life and death. After a time the severe inflammation began to abate; but his paralysis was so much increased as to confine him to his bed from that time onward. Finding he would never again be able to preach, he sent his resignation to the Church. The Church kindly refused to accept it, declaring it the unanimous wish of the Church "that he should live and die their trusted, honored and beloved pastor."

Shortly after going to Waukesha, Dr. Boyd published another volume, entitled "None but Christ." It has had an extensive circulation and been the means of leading many souls to Christ. The favor with which this book was received, encouraged him to believe that, though laid aside from the ministry, he might still be useful with his pen. Writing was not easy work to one lying on a bed and suffering almost constant pain; but he gave each forenoon to this work, writing with his own hand so long as it was not wholly helpless, and afterward by dictation to one of his daughters. He published in rapid succession three books for the young, entitled "Food for Lambs," "Young Converts" and "Wee Willie." During his active ministry, he had great delight and great success in preaching to children. He never grew old. He never grew away from the sympathies of youth. He always held a warm place in that part of his audience where every wise pastor will seek for a place—in the affections of the children. His books to the young bore no marks of having been written by a sick man, save in the tenderness that pervaded them. They were full of hopeful and cheerful and buoyant views of life and duty, and were eagerly read and largely blessed. In the Spring of 1868, he published "Grace and Truth," a book upon the "old, old story," to which he always returned with fresh enthusiasm and with steadily increasing force.

He then began the preparation of "The Trials and Triumphs of Faith," the largest of his books, the fruit of his most mature powers, and which with "None but Christ," constitutes the volume now sent forth under the title of "The World's Hope."

Dr. Boyd's journal at this time bears evidence of his great joy and gratitude in being permitted, though in great suffering, to prepare and send forth these printed messages of Gospel truth. Doubtless much of the fragrance and sweetness of the truth they contain are due to the pressure out of which they came. They are the utterance of a heart held severely and lovingly in God's hand. They came "out of the depths," and so have been to many thirsty souls as waters from deep wells.

They were written by one whose clear perceptions of the Way of Life were perfected by long afflictions and abounding consolations.

During these last years Dr. Boyd was a busy writer. In addition to the books he sent forth, he was a frequent contributor to the religious press, and all his writings were characterized by the same attractive freshness he gave to familiar Gospel truth. Without pretension to fine writing, his style had many of the qualities of best literature. His sentences are perspicuous, his language bright and racy, his illustrations abundant, but well-chosen and felicitous, and his aim always to bring the reader to a closer acquaintance with the vital truths of the Gospel. It is, therefore, no matter of wonder that they have been so signally useful in awakening the thoughtless, guiding the inquirer, and "edifying the body of Christ." Mr. Moody distributed thousands of copies of "Glad Tidings" in Great Britain, and was wont to say he knew of no book better for an inquirer. Dr. Boyd's days and years of suffering were greatly cheered by the good report which came to his sick room of the blessing that was attending his books wherever they went. He felt in them he was still preaching the Gospel, and to much greater audiences. On the very day of his funeral a letter came from a pastor in an Eastern city, giving an account of his conversion. The following is an extract from that letter—but one of very many that might be quoted:

"My pastor gave me 'None but Christ,' and it was while reading it away up in the third story of the shop, on King Street, in the early morning of the first of June, 1865, that I found Christ. From that moment to this hour I have not ceased to prize 'None but Christ,' and to think of Dr. Boyd as one of my nearest and dearest friends. I keep a number of copies for lending to the anxious, and I can safely say it has been the means of bringing more souls to a knowledge of the truth, than any book I have ever used. It is my favorite volume for anxious souls."

Rev. Charles H. Spurgeon wrote thus about "The World's Hope:"

"We are delighted with this book. It is after our own heart. Here we have the Gospel set forth in all its simplicity, not with wisdom of words and embellishments of chilling rhetoric, but after the fashion of the Lord of preachers, with many a simile and instructive parable. We were never more hearty in commending any book. Its theme, its style, its spirit —all win our admiration."

Tidings of this sort cheered the twelve years of his suffering. But he had other sources of happiness, one of which was his cheerful and thankful spirit by which he always saw the silver lining of the cloud. He says, "I have been kept very cheerful for the most part during my affliction. It was said of one that he had a knack at hoping, and I think that must be my case. Besides God has given me such views of His character and gospel that I can not be gloomy, much less despairing. Why should a living man complain and especially a man in whom Christ lives by his spirit, and to whom he says, 'Because I live ye shall live also.'"

It is not to be doubted these last words give the secret of that peacefulness and buoyancy of spirit, which marked all those silent years and which were a wonder to so many. Perhaps the best insight that can be given into the experiences through which the Lord was leading his servant in those ripening autumn days of his life, may be obtained from glances at his journal.

"August 1, 1873. Have been thinking a great deal about my helpless condition, confined to my bed for so many years, and wondering greatly what could be the design of my Lord in this affliction. My mind has been turned to the subject of prayer, and how no one need be useless while upon earth as long as he can pray.

"August 24, 1873. This is my fifty-seventh birthday and I have been solemnly reviewing my life. The goodness of God in contrast with my own sinfulness has affected me. That I was born under religious influence and that the Holy Spirit led me early to feel myself a lost and undone sinner with an interest in Jesus, I feel to be a matter of eternal gratitude. . . .

Our days are determined, the number of our years is fixed. A few years ago I was amid the bustle and excitement of a public life; now I am laid upon a bed of pain, where in a trying monotony the years roll over me, but I can almost see the end of the course, I trust through grace to finish it with joy. Already I can say, 'He doeth all things well.' 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' He has led me by the right way. . . . By faith the believer dies daily to the world, and that makes his dying, at last, easy. His soul is refreshed like Stephen's by a view of his glorified Lord waiting to receive him. Troubles may come in a sweeping crashing tempest, but his soul is calm, for his heart and his treasure are far above the storm.

"January 1, 1874. I have been permitted to enter upon another year. It has been a year of remarkable events both among nations and churches, and from my retirement I have watched them with great and prayerful interest. At this beginning of the year I have had some very solemn reflections about the swiftness of time and its shortness. I can with all my heart utter the prayer offered four thousand years ago, 'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' Oh! that in the steady on going of time I might attain to a holier life, a greater nearness to God and a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

"January 17, 1874. I am still a prisoner of hope. For six years and four months I have been confined to my bed. It can easily be supposed that I have had many trying hours during these years; but I can confidently say, to the glory of God's grace, that not for a moment have I been permitted to doubt God's love and wisdom in afflicting me, nor to cherish one murmuring thought. I know that the hand that snatched me as a brand from the burning, the hand that was nailed to the cross for me, is the same hand that holds the rod of affliction; and He will not inflict one stroke more than wisdom sees needful. I know that He stands by the furnace and will not make it hotter than is necessary to purify and fit for the higher service of Heaven.

"May 1, 1874. The joyous Spring has come once more

and all nature begins to put on her attractive robes. The Winter that I so much dreaded when it began has passed to return no more, and I have been borne through it much better than I expected. Oh! that a spring of reviving holiness might come to my soul. I know that in Jesus all fulness dwells, that He is made unto us sanctification as well as justification, and those holy impulses and spiritual thoughts for which my soul longs must come from Him. I hear Him say, 'Abide in me and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except abide in me.' What a close union this implies between Christ and the soul of the believer'

> A hope so much divine
> May trials well endure,
> And purge the soul from sense and sin
> As Christ himself is pure."

During these last years Dr. Boyd abated nothing from the intelligent and lively interest he always took in all public affairs both of the Church and the Nation. It was a frequent remark of friends who had visited him in his retirement that he knew far more of what was going on in the world, than the majority of people who were busy in its concerns. An omniverous reader of every thing in reach, he was thoroughly posted on current events the world around. Was there a revival anywhere? He knew about it and rejoiced in it. Did his favorite Temperance cause make progress at any point? He knew all the details of it and thrilled with pleasure as if he were in the midst of the battle. Were missions prosperous? His journal records his interest and his faith in all the work. And all the affairs of all the churches he had ever served, were fresh in his mind and their welfare borne constantly upon his heart. Thus while Mr. Moody was in Scotland, he wrote to his old friend John Robertson:

"The prayers of thousands are going up for him" (Mr. Moody) "daily, that he may be sustained in the wonderful work the Lord has given him to do. I have been anxiously watching the papers to see if he and his assistant were going

to visit Stirling and its vicinity, the scenes of my early labors and of many tender and affectionate remembrances. If you see him, give him my love and tell him that though laid upon a bed of sickness and pain, I follow him with my prayers and that the precious love of Jesus we have so often spoken about is my comfort and support day and night."

The monotony of his life at this time was somewhat relieved by the great numbers of people who came to Waukesha to derive benefit from the mineral waters, many of whom availed themselves of the privilege of visiting at his bedside. As his mind was alert and clear as ever, this privilege was prized by all who enjoyed it. He had the happy faculty of projecting himself thoroughly into the interests of others. He was, moreover, uniformly cheerful in his conversation. So visitors who came to comfort him found, in turn, they had been comforted, entertained and helped. His religion was full of joy. Without gloom and without cant, he could bring it in through the door of the most casual conversation in such natural and winning ways, as to leave the best of impressions. In this manner he was constantly preaching Christ, and people unused to personal talks on the subject of religion found themselves willing and profited listeners. Fond of anecdote, with a keen relish for wit and humor, he was the life of every little circle around his bed, and it was frequently remarked that little room, which had witnessed so much pain and sorrow, was the sunniest and brightest of spots. Other people brought their troubles to him, that they might be comforted, and in every conversation, whether merry or serious, he always seemed to contribute more than he received. No wonder that room was a favorite spot. Heaven, indeed, had favored it with a rare earthly buoyancy and a rare divine grace.

The wonders of that grace became more manifest when the family afflictions through which he passed in those years are remembered. The family of Dr. and Mrs. Boyd consisted of nine daughters, one of whom an infant, died in Scotland. The remaining eight grew up to womanhood, six of them having married during their father's life-time. Three of them

died while Dr. Boyd was confined to his bed — two being buried from the house and carried to his bedside in their coffins for the final farewell — and one of them dying in the village, of small-pox, could not be seen by her father, even for the painful privilege of a farewell look. Two sons-in-law also passed away during this time and five grandchildren. There were ten funerals from that house while he lay upon that bed. And yet he could say that not one murmuring thought ever crossed his mind! When, in the Spring of 1878, the body of the last of his glorified daughters, the one who had long been his amanuensis and helper in the preparation of his books, was brought to his bedside, there was an accent of holy triumph in his words: "It will not be long." And it was not. During the Summer and Autumn of that year, his disease assumed still graver forms, and it seemed as if the end must be imminent. But his wonderful constitution carried him through the Winter — a great sufferer but a triumphing saint. He longed for the release, when it should please the Lord, but he bore his wakeful nights and painful days without a repining word. He now became the man of one book, and that book the Bible. Other books were not often sought, but the Bible was his constant companion. As the Summer wore on, his condition, which had for years puzzled medical men, became a still greater mystery. The mystery was that he continued to live. He now would often sink to a half conscious state and lie for hours, as if hardly realizing what was passing about him, but if any one entered to converse with him, the lethargy was gone in an instant, the bright light shone in his eyes again, and the old animation and interest returned. So, to the last, he could at any moment rise out of his afflictions to take part in the most trivial concerns of those about them.

Thus he continued until August 30th, 1879. Some of his grandsons and the writer of this sketch had been visiting him and were about to take their departure. There were no indications then that precluded the thought that he might live for months. On that morning, feeling that he should probably never see his grandsons again, he spoke with them earn-

estly of their future life, and gave them loving counsel. To the writer he said, "I am wearying of this road. It is getting very rough; but I have learned to leave it all with God." During the morning, a number of ministerial friends, who had been at Waukesha in attendance upon the installation of the Rev. Robert Leslie, as pastor of the Baptist Church, called to bid him "Good bye." He led them in prayer with peculiar fervor, and then bade them farewell with great tenderness, realizing that he should not look upon their faces again. But the end was nearer than he thought. Just after noon he was taken with a chill, which the physicians recognized as the beginning of the end. He passed a night of dreadful suffering, but on Thursday morning seemed more comfortable. The twenty-third Psalm had furnished the theme for the prayer-meeting of the previous evening, and as his friends spoke of it, he also referred to the comforting words with evident delight. Too feeble to conduct family worship, he joined in it with rapt attention, and repeated over and over, with much fervor, the closing words, "For Jesus' sake." During the day he failed rapidly, but seemed conscious of all that was passing. When his favorite hymn was sung, "Rock of ages, cleft for me," he opened his eyes, saying at the same time, quite distinctly, "My Shepherd;" evidently the thought of the morning had been lingering with him through the day. These were his last words. None fitter could be spoken. Had not that Shepherd held him in His arms all those twelve weary years, and was he not even then at the very door, going in to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Toward midnight he opened his eyes with one earnest, grateful and loving look upon her who watched beside him and whom, in the dedication of this book, he had called "his constant, patient and affectionate nurse — his always sympathizing and true-hearted wife," and then, without a struggle, fell asleep in Jesus.

On Saturday a great concourse of friends from near and far followed his remains to their resting place in the cemetery, where among his dead kindred his body waits the resurrection of the just. On Sabbath evening all the churches of the

village united in a memorial service, which, though a memorial of Dr. Boyd, was also designed and calculated to honor the Savior whose grace had sustained him in his active life and in his prolonged sufferings. And the hymn that appropriately closed the service was one that, long a favorite with Dr. Boyd, might fittingly be inscribed above his place of rest.

In the Cross of Christ I glory.

He was fond of quoting a remark of Bengel's, "Were the highest heavens my pulpit, the universe my audience, and eternity my day, Jesus Christ alone should be my theme." To this theme he was supremely loyal. Wherever his sermon began he was sure to find his way to the cross before he closed. Whatever subject engaged his pen it was set in the light of Calvary. And when preaching and writing both had failed him, Jesus was the dearest theme of conversation. And by that singleness and grandeur of aim, "he being dead yet speaketh," in the books that will live, and in the life greater than the books, that will not be forgotten. He wrote once in his journal, and with a tremulous hand, these words sent him by some sympathizing friend:

I can do nothing but pray,
Lying here, useless day by day,
Tired feet that no more may go
On my Master's errands, to and fro.
Languid hands that perforce are still
Folded, inactive at His will;
The long, slow hours pass away
Only able to pray.

But what things are wrought by folded hands, what sermons preached by silent lips, what energies hidden in unspoken prayer—how loyally they serve who only wait—this will be the long lesson and the masterly surprise of eternity. And even here we can see the close of such a life is like the setting of a sun. The heavens are deeper and clearer, and the very shadows that gather across the world are soft and holy, and stretch away suggestively toward the morning that cometh.

THE

# WORLD'S HOPE,

OR

## The Rock of Ages.

# PART I.

THE

# Trial and Triumphs of Faith;

OR

## SCRIPTURE EXAMPLES.

"Followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises"

"These all died in faith."

# THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF FAITH.

## CHAPTER I.

### ABEL—AN ACCEPTED WORSHIPER.

THE inspired writers give us very short biographical notices of Scripture characters, but very comprehensive and pointed. They tell us simply what they did, and leave us to infer from that what they were. Their virtues were not overrated, their faults were not concealed. The key-note of a great character is often given in a few words or a single sentence, and the fact left to speak for itself.

There are many things that conspire together to make Abel a most notable character; not only a most interesting subject for our consideration, but one full of practical improvement. He was a member of the first family that ever existed on the earth. He was the first human being that was called to pass through the portals of death. Great is the harvest which death has reaped since, having made of our earth a huge sepulcher as it revolves around the sun; but his was the first human heart over whose strings the cold fingers of death groped; the first whose warm, bounding life was chilled by his icy touch. And it is surely worthy of remark, that the first person of our race that was called to go out to meet the King of Terrors was a young man. It was not one who had the frost of years upon his head, whose limbs were tottering and

palsied under the weight of years, who was first taken; but one in the prime of youthful vigor, and through whose full veins the tide of life danced merrily. A terrible rebuke to those who are planning to neglect the salvation of their souls, till the shadows of old age pass over them. Death's first victim was not only young, but such have been the vast majority of his victims ever since. And the first death in the world was *sudden*. With the suddenness of the lightning's flash, with the rapidity of the lion's spring, death came upon him. The grim King sent no notice of his approach; not by slow, slow advances did he attack the citadel of life; not even in the dark midnight hour did he come; but in the open fields, amid the splendor of heaven's light, with nature's voices of sweetest music in his ears, and the pulse of life throbbing vigorously in his bosom, Abel was stricken down in death.

But the best remains to be told. The first man that died in our world was a good man. We learn this, not by some flattering inscription put over his grave by the hand of partial friendship, nor by some glowing eulogy pronounced over his dust; but by the testimony of God himself. Before he died "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." Blessed be God, that the first human soul that passed from earth went to glory! Heaven had the first fruits. And it is a pleasing reflection, that after all the blighting, withering curse which sin has brought upon our world, vastly more of the human family will be saved than lost. More than one-half of our race die in infancy, and these are forever safe. Then there are the millions of the redeemed in every age—a cloud of witnesses: and then, before the end of time the world will have its long Sabbath of holy rest, its centuries of gospel triumph, when all shall rejoice in the truth. Yes; Christ shall have the majority, and the number of the lost in hell, the outcasts from God through unbelief, shall be but small compared with the vast congregation of holy, blood-washed souls, that shall be gathered around him in heaven—a multitude that no man can number. We thank God for this happy thought.

But the first man that died from this world was not only a good man, but a martyr also. He died for his religion. This vile, wretched business of religious persecution began very early, and it still goes on. "Marvel not," says the Master, "if the world hate you." We are told to expect that those who are of the flesh will persecute those who are of the Spirit. The slaves of sin have always hated the truth, and those whom it made free. The voice of good men testifying for God torments their consciences; and they think that the quickest way to silence is to kill them. Blows, not arguments; stripes, not logic; brute force, not persuasion, are the weapons which error delights to employ. They are carnal weapons, not spiritual; weapons forged in hell, not drawn from the polished armory of heaven.

One thing, however, that has troubled persecutors in every age is, that though they can kill good men, they cannot kill their principles. The man dies, but the truths he uttered live on, all the brighter and the stronger because of his death. Why did Cain kill Abel? God tells us that it was "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." But he did not get rid of the troublesome protest of his brother's principles by killing him. God said, "The voice of thy brother's blood calleth to me from the ground." And it not only called to God, but to men; and his voice has sounded down through the ages, and reverberated through the world, ever since. "He being dead yet speaketh." He never spoke so pointedly and eloquently in favor of God's grace, as when wrapped in his bloody shroud he lay in his grave. He then spoke with a voice potent to touch the hearts of men, and which the earth and the sod which covered his remains could not stifle. So it is ever. Truth persecuted advances more rapidly and spreads like a prairie fire before a sweeping tempest. God makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and "the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the Church."

Abel was the first to test the power of the covenant of grace to carry the soul through the awful realities of death. On the very spot where sin had shown its deformed visage, grace

planted its holy standard and obtained a victory. It began its work of restoration on the very soil, in the same family circle, where the curse and the ruin of sin had fallen. Before the sinner is driven out of Eden, the scene of his holiness and his happiness, and also the scene of his sin and his disgrace; the promise of grace comes to him. Not that God's grace only began when man sinned. No, it was from all eternity; like the life of Jehovah it had no beginning. But when man sinned, it began to show itself. Man's sin called out and made known what had forever existed in the divine mind. And wondrous grace met man just in the depth of his great need.

It is ever thus. If sin abounds, grace much more abounds. The sinner may sink down, down to great depths of sin and degradation; but he can find that the arms of mighty grace are still under him to lift him up, if he depends thereon. This grace met Paul in the midst of his bloody persecution. It met the poor, guilty jailor in the midst of his cruelty to the Lord's servants. It went, with the pleadings of love, to the Jerusalem sinners, with their hands red with the blood of the Holy and Just One. It does not stand on a pinnacle of proud dignity and wait for the sinner's return, but it goes to the lowest depths to seek and save.

It is the very nature of divine grace to manifest itself. Just as naturally as the sun pours out his bright and warming beams, or as the full fountain pours out its sparkling waters, so does Divine love break out in blessings upon our race. It is of the very nature of God to love; but infinite wisdom goes along with that love, selecting the time and the place and the way in which this grace was to be displayed. It is a foolish question: Could not God have appointed some other way to save sinners than through the death of his Son? No. The very fact that infinite love and wisdom selected that *one way*, sets aside every other. It is the master-piece of God; and much as it has done for our world already, it is yet to do much more. Much as we have seen of it at the foot of the cross, we will see much more at the foot of the throne. There it will

meet us with new displays of love, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. We shall then be able to comprehend more fully the wonders of sovereign grace; but after it crowns and enthrones us, we will still have to say, "It passeth knowledge."

It is wonderful that there is still such a tendency in the sinner's heart to put merit in the place of grace, man's shabby work in the place of Christ's glorious work. This is man resorting to mere human quackery, instead of going to the balm of Gilead, that alone brings health and healing to the soul. There is but one thing that can save a soul, and nothing but that, nothing before that, nothing besides that, can save; and that is faith in Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. It was by believing in this that Abel was saved; and you, my reader, can only be saved in the same way. O the glory, the sweetness, the nearness of this free grace! It is near us all, free to us all, and none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. Take a firm hold of Christ by the hand of faith, and your heart will be filled with what Samuel Rutherford called "a young heaven." A gentleman tells us that he asked a little girl of only five years, "Are you a sinner?" "No, sir," she promptly replied. "But," said he, "have you never done anything that was wrong?" "O yes, a great many times." "How, then, can you say that you are not a sinner?" "It is *tooken away*," was her reply, "Who has taken it away?" he asked. Her reply was, "I have trusted in Christ." None could have given a clearer and more intelligent idea of the plan of salvation.

Reader, you are now enjoying your day of grace. Like an angel of mercy it walks abroad and in tones sweet and clear, sounds out the story of God's love. Here and there some perishing sinner believes the message and is saved. Now it is a persecuting Saul, then a backsliding Peter. At one time it is a doubting Thomas, while at another it is an honest inquirer like Cornelius. But whether it was a proud ruler or an outcast woman, a humble publican, or a dying thief—in the fullness of Christ's love there was room for them all. The best robe is

put upon the wretched wanderer, and he is welcomed home as a fellow-heir with Christ. Then the believer can adopt the language of an old author, "My soul is like a hungry and thirsty child, and I need His love and consolation for my refreshment; I am a wandering and lost sheep, and I need Him as a good and faithful Shepherd; my soul is like a frightened dove pursued by the hawk, and I need His wounds for a refuge; I am a feeble vine, and I need His cross to lay hold of and wind myself about; I am a sinner, and I need His righteousness; I am naked and bare, and need His holiness and innocence for a covering; I am in trouble and alarm, and I need His solace; I am ignorant, and I need His teaching; simple and foolish, and I need the guidance of His Holy Spirit. When I am forsaken, He must be my support; when dying, my life; when mouldering in the grave, my resurrection. Well, then, I will part with all the world and all that it contains, rather than with Thee, my Saviour."

We desire now to fix attention upon the most important point in the history of Abel, and that is, that sinner as he was he was an accepted worshiper by the holy God. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." In these two brothers there was a vast difference—a difference almost as great as between light and darkness, as between an angel and a fiend. But in what did it consist? Not of anything natural to them, nor in their outward circumstance. In these respects they were alike. They were born of the same parents, brought up in the same family, heard the same instructions, were surrounded with the same circumstances, had naturally the same depraved hearts, and were both sinners before God. Yea, up to a certain point, their very religion was alike. They both recognized the Being of a God. They both acknowledged the truth that God should be worshiped, and that he has imperative claims upon us and upon all that we possess.

But here the difference between the two becomes very great. The one came to God in the way of God's appointment, and the other did not. The difference between them lay not in

anything in their natural characters, but in the sacrifices presented. "*By faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" so we see it was not something in the offerer, but in the offering, that made the one be accepted and the other rejected Cain came to offer to God the fruit of a sin-cursed earth, with no shed blood to remove that curse. By faith Abel grasped the great truth that "without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin." He saw that he was a sinner, and that the wages of sin was death. He saw, therefore, death and the terrible curse standing between him and communion with his God; and in his offering he brought a sacrificed life to meet the claims of God's insulted purity. Through the dying struggles of the lamb that he brought, through the blood that streamed forth from the victim, he looked away by faith to Calvary, and saw, but dimly it may be, the Saviour dying for him. And hence he had the witness that he was righteous and that his worship was accepted; not because of anything good in him, but simply because of the goodness of the medium through which he approached. It was the heaven-appointed medium.

We see, then, that the great cardinal truth upon which man's salvation has turned, ever since he became a sinner, is the shed blood of Jesus—a sinless victim. When Christ entered our world, it would not have been enough that he lived a sinless life, that he preached pure, heavenly truth, that he healed the sick, and brightened his pathway with the most God-like benevolence; all these would not have constituted him a Saviour. To be a Saviour for sinners he must die upon the cross; for it was his death that rent the veil that hung between man and his God; and that prevented all approach of the guilty creature to the infinitely holy Creator. His blood alone cleanses from all sin.

Here was the great mistake of Cain. He came with an unbloody sacrifice; merely the fruit of the earth that had the curse and stain of sin upon it. He came with it proudly as something that he had toiled for, and as a gift that would secure the favor of God. "God is not worshiped with men's

hands, as though he needed anything." No; the claims of infinite justice, the demands of holy law, cannot be met by the sweat of the sinner's brow, or the toil of his hands; he has nothing to offer God which he has not first received from Him; and so there can be no merit. Man, in the pride of his heart, would like to have the flattering unction laid to his soul that he can confer some favor upon God; that he can make Jehovah sometimes the receiver, not always the giver. But he seeth such proud souls afar off; he rejects with indignation their attempts to bribe him—their offerings and their pretended worship. "If I were hungry I would not tell thee."

And yet this *Cain worship* has been, and still is, the fashionable, popular religion of the world. No religionist has ever had so many followers as Cain. Every false religious system that has ever appeared in the world has gone upon this principle, that man can by his own gifts and deeds please God and secure his favor. Some of these systems of error may be more gross and degrading than others; but in this they all agree, that in their own prayers, their tears and repentance, their works and sacrifices, their alms and good deeds must lie their chief hope of salvation. Some of them, after doing the best that they can for themselves, will speak about Jesus being a helper to make up their deficiencies; but to depend upon Christ alone, to trust all on grace, as revealed in the gospel, is a doctrine that makes them look like Cain, of whom it is said, "he was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

Here we see that it was not a mere arbitrary act on the part of God, to reject the sacrifice of the one brother, and to accept the other. There was a good reason for it. The one adopted God's plan of acceptance, the other clung to one of his own. The one was filled with peace and love to God; the other was filled with wrath and enmity. The one went bounding into the presence of God with joyful assurance; the other went out from God's presence with a brow dark as a thunder-cloud. Cain's religion had a bad foundation; it rested on human merit. What, then, could be expected from it but misery and death? Abel's religion rested on the merits of

Christ; and it secured to him, therefore, all the fullness of God. In short, the whole difference might be summed up in one word: the one had faith and the other had not. To some this may seem a very small matter, but in the sight of God it was everything. And in matters of religion the question is not what will suit my notions, or what will please men; but what will please the Great Judge with whom we have all to do? If all the world was pleased with us, and the most learned critics of the world united in calling our theory of religion rational, and intellectual, and the very embodiment of all wisdom, what would it avail if, when the great testing time came, God should thunder out, "I know you not"—"Depart from me!" Now, we are expressly told, that "without faith it is impossible to please God;" and so those who "go in the way of Cain" must perish. Faith in what God said made Abel a child of God—a favorite of heaven; unbelief made Cain an outcast and a cast-away from his Lord's presence.

It may be asked, How did Abel come to know so well the plan of salvation? I answer, that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. His faith rested where the faith of all saints in all ages has rested, on God's promise. When Adam sinned, dark terror took hold of his mind; and, to show how far he had fallen, he sought to flee from the glance of the Omniscient eye! Dark suspicion, and remorse, and shame, all wrought together to trouble and distract his soul, as ocean is lashed into a fury by tempests. The thought of God's presence was now as painful to him as it had once been delightful; and the chief wish of his soul was to live as far from God as possible—in a Godless state, in a Godless world. But God follows the fleeing rebel; not with thunderbolts of wrath, but with words of grace and promise. The promise of a coming Saviour was given, who, through suffering, was to bruise the head of the serpent.

It has been truly said, "This was but a dim and partial revelation. It was the first ray of returning light. It was not the sun,—that was not to rise for ages,—neither was it the morn.

It was only the first streak of brightness upon the overhanging clouds. It foretold the dawn; it was the forerunner of the sun. The clouds did forthwith depart, the curse did not leave the earth, man's restoration was not complete; but the process was begun by which all these would be accomplished. Yes, we can see that all the elements of the glad tidings of the Gospel were wrapped up in this promise. The coming deliverer was to be a man, born of a woman; and yet, he was evidently to be something more than man, for he was to be the deliverer of the race and the destroyer of Satan. The Saviour was to be a sufferer, and yet to come off a conqueror; he was to meet with enmity, bitter and relentless; was to engage in a conflict, and in that conflict was to be wounded; and through this very wounding victory was to come. This promise was but dim, but along with it sacrifices were established; and the one cast light upon the other. The altar stood side by side with the promise; and what was seen with the eyes helped to explain what was heard with the ears. There was the flaming sword, and nothing but blood was able to turn aside its vengeful edge; and right before that sword of justice lay the bleeding victim of sacrifice upon the altar; all pointing to a time when the sword of Divine Justice would be quenched in the blood of Jesus on the hill of Calvary.

These are the great truths which Abel learned and, what is better, which he practiced. Doubtless Cain had the same opportunities to know the truths which his brother possessed; but unbelief shut up his heart against them. He was not the victim of an arbitrary sovereignty, that took one and rejected another; without any good reason. It is true that one was taken and the other was left; but it was then as it is now, one was taken because he had faith in Christ, and the other was left because of his unbelief. The Divine Master with whom we have to do is no respecter of persons; but He has great respect to the humble in heart, and takes up his abode with those who lovingly confide in his word.

The great difference between the two brothers as worshipers, reminds us forcibly of similar cases occurring many cen-

turies later. Take the case of the Pharisee and the Publican, who went up to the temple to pray, in our Lord's days upon earth. What a contrast between these two men! "One nearer to the altar stood, the other to the altar's God." The one, full of pride and vain glory, comes to tell the Lord what a good man he is; the other, emptied of self and utterly stripped of all human dependence, comes to cast himself on God's mercy alone. The one comes to prove himself the chief of Pharisees; the other, to confess himself the chief of sinners. The one comes to vindicate himself and condemn his fellow worshiper; the other comes to condemn himself and vindicate God. The one goes up to a great height of self-glorification, by which he is only sinking into hell; the other goes down to a great depth of self-abasement, by which he rises to heaven. And we need not wonder that when the hour of worship was over, the one went down to his home a child of wrath, an heir of hell; while the other went down to his house justified, a child of God and an heir of eternal glory.

We see the same contrast presented in the case of the two thieves upon the cross. They both heard the words of truth that Jesus spoke upon the cross. They were both equally near to Him in the local sense of the term. They were both sinners, on the verge of eternity, their souls exposed to the same peril. They were in exactly the same outward circumstances; had the same opportunities of being saved. Yet one begins to pray, the other to blaspheme. One reviles Christ, the other confesses him. One vindicates our Lord's innocence, the other joins with the mocking crowd against him. In short, the one believes in our Lord's power to save him, his prayer being the prayer of faith, while the other continues in unbelief and sin. The result is, that the one dies with the sound of pardon and acceptance ringing in his ears and comforting his soul, while the other dies as he lived, a stranger to God and holiness.

How evident, then, it is, that persons enjoying the same privileges, who have listened to the same preaching, for whom the same fervent prayers have been offered, who have been tenderly nurtured in the same pious family, and passed through

the same glorious revivals; may at last be separated from each other, far as heaven is from hell. Yes, persons may perform the same outwardly religious acts; and yet, what is piety in one is profanity in another, because of the state of their hearts. The same holy words may be uttered, the same outward religious acts observed; and yet, what is spiritual life to one may be death to another. To the one the gospel is the savor of life unto life, and to another of death unto death. Just as the Egyptians went down into the same sea, and by the same path, as the Israelites; but what proved life and salvation to the people of God proved death and destruction to their enemies.

The Apostle Paul makes a statement concerning Abel which, being of general application to all men, is very impressive: "He being dead yet speaketh." Men are apt to think that when one has closed his eyes upon life and his body is covered up in the bosom of mother earth, this is the end of his influences and acts below, and that henceforth he is as if he had never been. But this is a great mistake. No matter how humble or how exalted; whether he acted in the eyes of a single family, or in the eyes of the nations of the world; whether he spoke to a few hearers from his chair at his own fireside, or from the most exalted throne on earth; his words will sound down through the ages, as we have heard voices echoing amid the mountain gorges, or reverberating from summit to summit. "None of us," says Paul, "liveth to himself." That is, others must be affected by our life either for good or evil. And so, "no man dieth to himself." Centuries after we are dead, there will be souls made happy or miserable, saved or lost, through the influences we started before we died. This would be readily acknowledged in the case of great and distinguished men, who have filled the world with their fame; and especially those whose printed words survive them, and influence for good or evil their numerous readers. But it is equally true, though on a smaller scale, with the most obscure. We cannot live without touching strings of influence that reach into eternity.

What vast importance does this thought impart to life! Life

would be but an empty, vain, paltry thing, if divorced from eternity. But when we know that all we think, and say, and do, all that we enjoy and suffer, all that elevates us with hope or depresses us with sorrow, all our calms and our storms, our weariness and our rest, are having a direct bearing upon our own everlasting state, and that of others; how does life loom up into an importance that overshadows all worlds! We say it is a solemn thing to die, but it is a thousand times more solemn to live. How we shall die, and where we shall be, millions of years from now, are dependent on the use we make of the frail thing we now call life. We are now gathering up the elements of blessing or woe in which we are to be wrapped when the sun shall have shot his last ray, and all the retinue of stars shall have expired in endless night. In this view of it, life is a priceless, glorious gift, but has hanging upon its slender thread the most tremendous consequences.

If we must speak after death, we should so live that we shall speak for God and for the good of souls. And we should welcome any trial that God sends, that will enable us to do so more effectively. Hundreds of years ago an old Puritan minister, while under affliction, wrote a little book called the "Bruised Reed" which was the means of the conversion of Richard Baxter. Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," led to the conversion of Philip Doddridge. His "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," led to the conversion of Wilberforce, and his "Practical View of Christianity," was much blessed to Dr. Chalmers, of Scotland, whose influence now is world wide. When the Lord drove the plowshare of affliction through that old Puritan's heart, turning up to his view its hidden evils, and giving him a deeper sympathy with God in the great work he is carrying on, little did he realize the great harvest of glory that was to redound to God by such painful discipline. But he sees it now. Exalted far above the region of sorrow and strife and sin, he sees the dealing of the Lord in the light of his love; and knows that "He hath done all things well."

It has been a wonder to many, why Abel, and good men like him ever since, have been permitted to suffer affliction. But

these have been intended for their personal good, and to make them useful to others, through all eternity. Like to yonder stream rushing on, free and untrammeled among the mountains, or through the veins of the earth; but there is nothing to distinguish it from any other stream of common water, till one day it strikes in its course some sanative mineral, by which it has a healing property imparted to it, that gives it a world-wide fame and brings to it thousands of invalids to rejoice in its health-giving virtues. Thus many now in glory are not only thanking God personally for their afflictions, but others who have been saved through their instrumentality, are helping them to swell their song of praise. They now see, with David, that it was good for them that they were afflicted; and are ready to say with an old writer, "O healthy sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!"

Dear, unconverted reader, have you pious friends in heaven? Like Abel, they being dead are yet speaking to you. With them life's weary battle is over, and well over. Wandering by the banks of the river of life, or walking the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, they are able to look over the past, and with quickened memory to bring up scene after scene through which they have struggled their weary way. There is that pious mother that so often prayed for you; that godly father that counseled you; that sabbath-school teacher that so earnestly sought to lead your young feet into the ways of the Lord, and that faithful pastor under whose powerful appeals of love you so long sat as a hearer. These all speak to you to-day. They plead with you now. They urge you to flee from the wrath to come. They tell you of the willingness of that Jesus to save you, whose unclouded glory they now behold. They tell you that His blood still speaks better things than the blood of Abel—speaks of mercy and love. O let them not speak in vain!

"Know we not our dead are looking
Downward with a sad surprise,
All our strifes of words rebuking
With their mild and loving eyes?
Shall we grieve these holy angels, shall we cloud these blessed skies?

"Let us draw their mantles o'er us,
Which have fallen in our way;
Let us do the work before us,
Cheerly, bravely, while we may,
Ere the long night—silence cometh, and with us it is not day."

## CHAPTER II.

### ENOCH. THE HEAVENLY WALK.

A good man once observed, that when he got to heaven he expected to meet with three causes of wonder. First, he would wonder to see some that he did not expect to see there; second, he would wonder to find some *not* there that he did expect to see; and third, he would wonder most of all to find such an unworthy sinner as himself there. No doubt there will be many whose names have occupied a large place in the religious world on earth, whose names will not be known in heaven. They were zealous for a creed; they had talent and tact and courage in leading a party; they were in their element amidst the bitter rage and unholy strife of unprofitable controversy, but their hearts were not right in the sight of God. They made themselves a name and a fame; they had many followers and admirers; their partizans loaded them with titles and honors; and when they died, volumes of biography were written about them, and marble monuments told a flattering story of their virtues; but when they approached the gates of heaven, God said, "I know you not." When the names recorded in the Lamb's book of life shall come to be read in heaven, when the affairs of earth shall be wound up, it will be found that names which went sounding down through the trumpet of history; names that made whole nations tremble, will not be heard there at all. While on the other hand, the name of many a humble child of God, but little known on earth, or if known, covered all over with the slanders of the wicked, shall then stand high in the roll of glory. Saints, whose names were unknown among the proud ones of earth, or spoken only with a sneer, will be pronounced with approbation before assembled worlds. They

that confessed Christ here, shall be confessed by him there; and all the renown of earth is an empty bauble compared to that glory and honor.

We have been led to make these remarks from considering the case of Enoch. Only a few words convey to us all that we know about him; but these are of such a character that we long to know more, and make us look forward with delight to the time when we shall see him face to face in heaven. Enoch, being contemporary with Adam, had no doubt learned from his lips the dark story of man's fall, and the brighter one of God's grace, as seen in the promise. The dreadful evil of sin, as seen in the rampant iniquity of the people around him, whose crimes were already crying to heaven for vengeance, must have deeply distressed his heart, and he felt the necessity of stemming the tide of profanation and impiety that rolled in murky darkness before his eyes. It is a pleasing reflection; that in the darkest and most declining time which our world has ever seen, God has never left himself without faithful witnesses to testify for him. He has always had a seed to serve him.

There was a Noah in the midst of the general apostacy. There was a Lot in the midst of Sodom. There was an Abraham in Ur, and a Job in Uz. In the days of Elijah God's holy eye could discover seven thousand faithful souls, scarcely known to the world, and never wanting to be known. And in Malachi's days, when religion had sunk into such a low and formal state, the names of a few precious jewels in God's sight could be recorded, who feared the Lord and thought upon his name, and cheered their lonely pilgrim path by heavenly converse. Like an oasis in a desert; like a sweet flower peeping up amid the departing snows, like a bright star breaking out of a dark night to cheer the tempest-tossed mariner; such is the child of God, gathering an increase of brightness from surrounding gloom. To live *in* the world but not *of* it; like a holy Daniel in Babylon, not a partaker of her sins, but an unflinching protester against them; this is the position for the good man to occupy. And though the influences of the world

are corrupting, yet strength from a Divine source is given to those who seek it by faith. In the dark ages, when pardon through the blood of Jesus was ignored, and mercenary priests hawked pardons about the streets for sale; when justification by faith in Jesus was sneered at, and justification by fastings and scourgings and other penances was unblushingly proclaimed; when what was called the Church of Christ became rich by the blood of souls; God kept alive the Albigenses and Waldenses to testify for the truth. The world has never been so dark that the sparkling rays of the Star of Bethlehem might not be seen by those who were looking for the true light.

The inspired record about Enoch is very brief, but very suggestive. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." And upon this the apostle Paul says, "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Some writers have spoken of Abel's death as a symbol of Christ as the great Propitiation for sin, and of Enoch's translation as a type of His resurrection and ascension. But not to adopt an interpretation that may be more fanciful than real, it is evident that if Abel's death showed the awful nature of sin, the translation of Enoch showed the power and glory of Divine grace. In the one we see sin digging a gloomy and loathsome grave; in the other we see grace opening a bright and glorious heaven. In the death of the one we see the hatred of God to sin; but in the translation of the other we see the beauteous immortality which his love opens up for the faithful—for those that trust the promises of grace. The one said, "The wages of sin is death;" the other said, "The gift of God is eternal life."

"Enoch walked with God." This implies a very high state of piety and of spirituality of mind. The expression is so often used in religious meetings, and we have become so familiar with the sound of the words, that we scarcely realize how much it implies. It tells us of a nearness to God, of an enjoyment

of God, of a sweetness felt in the presence of God, of a perfect confidence in Him, and holy familiarity in conversing with Him, of which none but the choice spirits of our race, those of whom the world was not worthy, have ever been made partakers. It is man dwelling with God, and God taking up his abode with man. "I in them, and they in me," says the Lord Jesus. To souls untaught from above, these expressions sound like the ravings of a dreamy mysticism, but to those taught in the school of Christ their unmistakable meaning is engraven on their hearts. They speak that which they know.

President Edwards gives us a correct picture of walking with God, in a relation of his own experience. He says, "I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ, and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full and ready to break, which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath.' I often felt a longing and lamenting in my heart that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. My mind was greatly fixed in Divine things, year after year, often in walking alone in the woods and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer, and converse with God; and it was always my manner at such times to sing forth my contemplation. I was almost constantly in ejaculatory prayer, wherever I was. Prayer seemed to be natural to me, as the breath by which the inward burning of my heart had vent. The delights which I now felt in the things of religion were of an exceedingly different kind from what I ever enjoyed before, and what I had no more notion of when a boy, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul-animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart, and did not arise from sight of the Divine excellency of the things of God, or any taste of the soul-satisfying and life-giving good there is in them."

Yes; this is truly walking with God. And blessed be God, it is not confined to patriarchs and prophets, to apostles and martyrs, to ministers and reformers. There are thousands

and tens of thousands to-day thus walking with God, that the world has never heard of and never will till the affairs of earth shall be brought to their final settlement. It has been my happy privilege to know many of them, and to see them ripening for their future life, as they walked on the verge of glory. And so much of heaven did they possess upon earth, that their departure seemed more a translation than dying. We felt the great blank which the loss of their presence here created, and with heart-longings gazed after them into the heavens, and wished to follow them to their blessed home.

"And after he was dead and gone,
And e'en his memory dim,
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,
More full of love because of him."

To walk with God implies a converted character. No man by nature chooses God for his companion. On the contrary there is an aversion, an enmity, a dislike to think of God, as he is revealed in the Bible, that make men turn their backs upon him and seek to get out of his presence. "I remembered God and was troubled." It is true, that sinners sometimes get up a god in their own imagination of which they are not afraid, and which they even cherish an affection for. They conjure up a god all mercy, making no distinction between sin and holiness, between the righteous and the wicked; a god all made up of what they call goodness—a goodness without truth and without justice; and this god they can walk with. But it is just as much an idol they worship as that of the heathen man who makes one with his own hands, and carries it about in his pocket, or sets it up in his house. Until men are converted their whole course is away from the God of the Bible. They are going from God and toward destruction, and that with increasing speed day by day, until in conversion a total change takes place. Indeed, the word conversion, coming from the Latin word *convertere*, means to turn round. Then they walk with God instead of away from him. Their faces are turned towards God and heaven, instead of towards the world and hell. Their old pleasures and pursuits they

leave behind them, and turn with new and consecrated energies to objects worthy of their high destiny, and their immortal natures.

To walk with God, in its very nature, implies being of one mind with him. "How can two talk together unless they be agreed?" We must submit our own wills to his, and permit his wisdom to take the place of our presumption. We must confide in him, willing to go where he leads, and to suffer what he appoints. We read of two apostels who walked together for a time, but they were not of one mind; and strife and contention was the result. They had to separate and each take his own way. You have seen a criminal walking with a police officer, but it was not a willing walk; he was eagerly looking for a chance to escape. You have seen an insane person walking with his keeper; but it was not a loving, joyous, intelligent walk. The Christian's walk is very different from all of these. He commits himself to God to be led as he pleases, just as a loving child puts his hand into its father's, and walks with him through dark night or dense forest, with perfect confidence in his love and his wisdom.

It was among the very first signs of his conversion when Paul cried, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" It is a state of mind that gives obedience in feeling and obedience in action. Instead of standing up in opposition to the great, harmonious, and holy will of our God, which is only beating our heads with frantic rage against a rock, we must say, "Not my will, but thine be done." The chief misery of earth arises from men setting up their own proud, selfish and wicked wills, and wanting to make everything bow to them. What are strifes and contentions in families, or nations, or churches, but a clashing of such wills? And what causes the impenitent sinner to live and die an outcast from all good, but because he will not submit to God's way of saving him?

We could not walk with any comfort with one who was to us an object of suspicion. If you thought that he was going to rob you, or had designs upon your life, you would seek to get as far away from him as possible. To those who do not walk

by faith, the thought of the constant presence of God is dreadful. They do not like to think of it, nor to speak of it; and though they may not say so in so many words, yet they would rather that there was no God! Yea, they sometimes speak out the bitterness of their hearts in the words, "Depart from us; we desire not a knowledge of thy ways."

Now, the believer is one who has been reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Through faith in Jesus he has seen the heart of God, and knows something of the great, abounding love that reigns there. In that love he confides. He can look up into the face of his Heavenly Father with the warm glow of affection, and feels it his highest heaven to be in his presence. John Bunyan, in relating his conversion, gives a good idea of the beginning of his heavenly walk. "One day as I was passing into the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: 'Thy righteousness is in heaven;' and methought withal I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There I saw was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, 'He wants my righteousness,' for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.' Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed,—I was loosed from my afflictions and irons, my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful Scriptures of God left off to trouble me. Now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God."

To walk with God implies a man of prayer. We would not feel much pleasure in walking with one with whom we could not converse. Now, prayer is just talking with God. When the two disciples had that delightful walk on the way to Emmaus, their sweetest recollection of it was recorded in the words, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures."

This is so still. The happiest part of the Christian's journey, and the part that he will look back upon with the greatest delight, will be the hours spent in converse with God. He knows that he has sent requests to God, and that he has got back answers from him. He needs no labored argument to prove to him the existence of God any more than he needs to have his own existence proved. He is in daily communication with the Father of Spirits; and the secret of the Lord is with him. He constantly asks and receives.

The Rev. Dr. Murray gives us an illustration of this. He says: "There was among my people a man in middle life, a German by birth, and a remarkably simple-hearted, pure-minded Christian. Whoever was absent, he was always present at the place of prayer. One evening early in December, as I was about retiring to rest, I heard a knock at my door, and my German friend was introduced, his countenance full of emotion. On taking his seat, his first words were these: 'My dear pastor, I have come to tell you that the Lord is about to revive his work here.' Surprised at his appearance and language, and at the lateness of his visit, I asked him, 'Why do you think so?' He replied as follows: 'About eight o'clock this evening, I went up to my hay-mow to give hay to my cattle, and while there the Spirit of God came upon me, and has kept me there praying until now. I feel that God is about to revive his work, and I could not go into my family until I told you.' The entire simplicity and earnestness of the good man convinced me that God had vouchsafed to visit his servant. After some conversation we parted, mutually agreeing to pray and labor for a revival of religion, and to engage as many as we could to do the same."

The revival did come, and that with much power. The prayer-meetings became crowded and very solemn. The Spirit of God accompanied the preaching on Sabbath; and a mighty ingathering of souls was given, in answer to that prevailing prayer in the hay-mow.

A poor colored woman, in Ohio, sat in the corner of the gallery in the house of God on the Sabbath; and she would

single out some young man and continue to pray for him, till she saw him come forward and join the church. Then she would take up the case of another, and another, till in the course of some years, twenty young men for whom she had thus prayed, but with whom she was not personally acquainted, were brought to Christ. No one knew what she was doing; but she disclosed the fact to her pastor on her death-bed. Many of that congregation might have been ashamed to walk with that humble child of God; but the Lord of all worlds was not ashamed of her, but gave her the holy privilege of the sweetest fellowship and communion with Himself.

As a man, Jesus was constant in prayer. He is a bright example to us of what it is to walk with God. He often retired for converse with his Father, even spending whole nights in this way. He was always in the spirit of prayer, often praying *silently* when in the midst of a throng. This is clear from what he said at the grave of Lazarus: "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always; but because of those that stand by I said it." Jesus had been praying there right in that crowd, but they had not heard his prayer, nor seen any signs of his praying, until they heard the expression of his thanks for being heard. Thus in the crowded street, in the steamboat or the rushing railroad car, in the counting-room or the work-shop, the Christian can keep up his walk with God and his converse with heaven. The holy McCheyne said, "It is best to have one hour *alone with God* before engaging in anything else. At the same time, I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes, or hours, or by solitude."

Of that dear servant of God, whose words I have just quoted, his biographer says, "With him the commencement of all labor invariably consisted in the preparation of his own soul. The forerunner of each day's visitations was a calm season of private devotion during morning hours. The walls of his chamber were witnesses of his prayerfulness—I believe of his tears as well as of his cries. The pleasant sound of psalms often issued from his room at an early hour; then followed the

reading of the Word for his own sanctification ; and few have so fully realized the blessing of the first psalm."

Dear reader, can there be any thing nobler, any thing more blessed and desirable than such a walk as this? How paltry the honor of walking with kings and nobles, and the greatest of earth's sons, compared to this? James Janeway, writing of his brother John, says: "I once hid myself, that I might take the more exact notice of the intercourse that I judged was kept up between him and God. But oh, what a spectacle did I see! Surely, a man walking with God, conversing intimately with his Maker, and maintaining a holy familiarity with the great Jehovah. Methought I saw some one talking with God. Methought I saw a spiritual merchant in a heavenly exchange, driving a rich trade for the treasures of another world. Oh, what a glorious sight it was! Methinks I see him still. How sweetly did his face shine ! Oh, with what a lovely countenance did he walk up and down—his lips going, his body oft reaching up, as if he would have taken his flight to heaven ! His looks, smiles, and every motion spake him to be upon the very confines of glory. Oh, had one but known what he was then feeding upon ! Surely he had meat to eat which the world knew not of!"

It must be evident to all reflecting minds, that a life of walking with God must be a happy one. Away from God, man's soul is in a state of unrest. Man is not made to find happiness in himself, or in the world ; but is so constituted that neglect of his Creator forms his deepest misery, while His favor forms his highest bliss. We are not independent. We cannot stand alone. We do not carry around with us a fountain of satisfaction and happiness from which we can draw, when troubled with the soul's deep cravings after good. It is not in the cramped up, narrow circle of our own individuality that we can ever find the blessed life ; but only in connection with the God and Giver of every perfect gift. The soul is a greater and a nobler thing than we think. It is not mere *things* that can satisfy it. Try to fill it with honors, titles, riches, and the vastest material possessions, and it resents the result by enlarging

still more the boundary of its desires. Man is a spirit, and nothing can give him rest, peace, satisfaction, but the love of the Father of spirits,—the living God himself.

When the soul is drawn away from the Great Central object of its love and adoration, God himself, it is left to wander in darkness and uncertainty; life gets divided up into a hundred different objects and pursuits, each promising much in the way of happiness, but giving nothing in the end; the chase after each new idol becomes hot and eager, till it is found to be a cheat and a lie; and then comes the reaction of grief and disappointment, when the heart almost despairs of ever finding a resting place, and gives utterance to its yearnings in the cry, "O, who will show us any good!" Then the great danger is, that the soul will sink down into a stupid indifference as to the great duties of life—a dogged, sullen silence of the heart, in which but little is feared and little hoped for; and which reminds one of the horrid, unnatural stillness that falls upon the doomed city through which the plague rages, and which little disturbs but the rattle of the dead-cart on its dreaded round of duty.

Happy is the man. who, feeling his soul restless as the heaving, turbulent sea, and satisfied that none but God can give him rest, turns to Him with his whole heart. Leaving the world's vanities behind, he grasps by faith eternal realities; and knows that in finding God through Christ, he has found all his soul can need. His mind then becomes calm as the little lake I have seen surrounded with hills, secure from the tempests that beat upon the mountain's brow, and reflecting from its tranquil bosom all that was fair and lovely in the heavens above. In God's love you will find a peace that will flow on and on like a river. His presence will give vigor to all your powers, strengthen all your feebleness, satisfy all your cravings after a higher life, ennoble your immortality, and with all His unspeakable perfection, become your portion for ever.

It is often the excuse of worldly minds, when urged to high attainments in piety, that they have so many of the active duties of life to attend to, the care of providing for a large family,

the toil of working for those dependent upon them, that they have little time for walking with God. But Enoch was the father of a family of children, and yet his soul soared heavenward, and hence gathered fresh strength for the duties of earth. It is a delusion to think that we must retire from the active duties of life and from its responsibilities, in order to be very pious characters. People have thought if they could retire to some still, sequestered spot, where they would have nothing to do but to pray and read and meditate upon Divine things, they could live an uncommonly holy life. They forget that religion does not consist of certain mental processes and high wrought moral feelings, but in obeying God; and in obeying Him where he puts us, not where we choose to put ourselves. Our religion is to show itself in seeking to make the world better, not in running away from it; in conquering difficulties that lie in the way of duty, not in fleeing from the duty to avoid the difficulty; in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world while in it, not by going out of it; in short, in working for God where the work is hardest and most needed; in fighting the battles of truth where the conflict rages the fiercest; in seeking not our own ease and enjoyment by a life of solitude and concentration of thought upon our own states and frames and feelings; but by mingling with the great mass of humanity, in deepest sympathy with Him who came to seek and to save the lost.

The piety of Enoch led to deeds of active and self-denying zeal. He did not set down in pleasant meditation, seeking only his own happiness and enjoyment, and leaving the wicked around him to perish. He was a faithful preacher of righteousness. He warned men to flee from the wrath to come. He preached Christ unto them. This we learn from Jude, who says: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." What more

pointed and searching truths could be uttered in the ears of sinners than these which this good man uttered? There was no yielding to fear of man; no seeking of their favor instead of their souls; no shrinking from bringing out the whole testimony of God. He came from pleading with the Lord to plead with his fellow-men. His intercourse with Jehovah imparted to him courage which earth nor hell could shake.

"He was not, for God took him." His work on earth was ended. He was ripe for glory. Angels longed for his society, and the faithful who had preceded him to glory stood in joyous expectation to give him a welcome. Without going through the sufferings of a death-bed, of days and nights of languor and pain, God took him home. There, free from a sinning heart and a sinning world, he could walk with God in the perfection of holiness. That walk is still continued as the ages roll on; and as from age to age he has seen vast numbers of blood-washed souls added to the sinless congregation, doubtless his gratitude to the God of all grace has increased, and his song attained to a loftier rapture.

"On we haste, to home invited,
There with friends to be united
In a surer bond than here;
Meeting soon, and met for ever!
Glorious Hope! forsake us never,
For thy glimmering light is dear."

"In that fair land shall disappear
The shadows which we follow here,
The mist-wreaths of our atmosphere."

THE FLOOD.

## CHAPTER III.

### NOAH—A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is of the very nature of sin to spread like a deadly leprosy. Though in the days of Noah the world was but yet in the very infancy of its being, yet sin had deepened and widened as it rolled along its dark course; till hatred of law and truth and goodness had become almost universal. The wickedness of man had grown to gigantic and fearful proportions. That guilty race were deluged in sin before they were deluged in the waters of the flood. Had they not been first buried under the accumulated pollution of their guilt, they would not have been engulphed in the avenging waters.

In the midst of such an appalling disregard of God, Noah stands up before us a noble spectacle. His simple and child-like faith, and his unflinching and persevering obedience are truly sublime. There is exhibited holy integrity in the midst of universal corruption; an unwavering adherence to right, when it was the object of popular contempt and scorn; the fullest recognition of God's supreme right to govern and to be obeyed, when all had sunk into unbelief, and revolted against His laws. It is only when men are brought into circumstances that test and try them thoroughly, that we know what they are We are told that the man who is tried is blessed; and the more severe the trial the more glorious is the triumph of Divine grace when it brings him off unscathed. And to every man there comes his testing time—his time of trial; and the worse the state of society around him, the more conspicuous becomes the integrity of the man that stands boldly up for God. Thus Noah stood like a rock amidst the swelling torrent of abounding sin around him, and not for a moment was the purity of his purpose shaken. There he stood, a true, faithful,

unbending witness for God; his meekness under insult; his deep piety shining bright in its solitude; and his undaunted heroism, exciting our warmest admiration. To thus stand faithful among the faithless requires something more than a mere religion of form or ceremony; it requires the power of God's mighty grace rooted in the deepest depths of our souls, and a firm hold upon God's truth which the rudest shocks of time can never relax.

Noah, in the course of God's providence, was made a public man—a representative man—whose footsteps were to leave deep prints upon the sands of time. But, for his public work he got all his strength and power in secret communion with God. It is in the depth of his devotion that we are to find all the source of his fidelity to the public interests committed to his care. If he was a man of power it was because he was a man of prayer. He fought a good fight; but it was because he was clad in armor burnished in the light of heaven. His trust was in God—a trust that was not disappointed,—for the same waves of desolation that brought destruction to the wicked, only floated him nearer to his gracious Friend. All external to him was uproar and confusion, but all within him was the sweet calm of God's peace. He found a safe retreat, a holy repose, in the center of all life and blessedness—the favor of Almighty Love. And though his lot was cast upon evil times he found a sweet calm, a holy pavilion, under the shadow of the eternal throne. What though the whole world was against him, when he had this testimony from the lips of Jehovah, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation!"

Noah was a man of strong faith. He was warned of God of a coming event, not likely to take place so far as human wisdom could see. For centuries the laws of nature had rolled on in their undisturbed and placid course The seasons had come and gone in regular succession. Rain had fallen only to bless the earth. The rivers and brooks had borne their waters safely to the sea; and that vast world of waters had been kept in place by the fixed decree, "Hitherto shalt thou go and no farther." Men began to speak about the fixed laws of Nature,

and then, as now, felt as if they were *so fixed* that God himself could not change them. It is no new thing for men to wish to make God the slave of his own laws; and to argue that things which God has said shall be done, because they will interfere with the laws of nature. No doubt there were some of these very people in those days, who sought to show how impossible it was that a flood could take place, and laughed to scorn the warnings of the man of God, as the ravings of fanaticism; as they intrenched themselves behind what they called the laws of nature. But Noah firmly and implicity believed God. The Lord had said it; and that was enough for him. The arguments of the philosophers were no more to him than the chirping of grasshoppers, when the voice of eternal Wisdom was sounding in his ears.

But it appears that Noah's faith in the first place operated by *fear*. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Some people think that if a man has any fears, it is a sure proof that he has no faith. But this is a mistake, for faith often intensifies fear. When the sinner honestly believes the threatenings of God's law, it drives him to Christ. When a man believes himself in danger of drowning he takes a firm grasp of the rope that is flung to him. John Bunyan says, "I was brought into such a dread and horror of the wrath of God that I could not help trusting in Christ; I felt that if he stood with a drawn sword in his hand I must even run right upon its point sooner than endure my sins." If fear was to have no part in man's turning to God, why has God put so many terrors in the Bible? Why did one say, in view of the danger of sinners, "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy laws"? Why did Paul say, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we pursuade men"? No doubt the great power of the Gospel is love; but it also utters its stern voice of terror in the words, "He that believeth not shall be damned!"

On this subject Dr. Guthrie says, "God indeed tells us of hell, but it is to persuade us to go to heaven; and, as a skillful

painter fills the background of his picture with his darker colors, God puts in the smoke of torment and the black clouds of Sinai, to give brighter prominence to Jesus, the cross of Calvary, and his love to the chief of sinners. His voice of terror is like the scream of the mother bird when the hawk is in the sky. She alarms her brood that they may run and hide beneath her feathers; and as I believe that God had left that mother dumb unless he had given her wings to cover her little ones, I am sure that He who is very pitiful, and has no pleasure in any creature's pain, had never turned our eyes to the horrible gulf unless for the voice that cries, 'Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.' We had never heard of sin had there been no Saviour; nor of hell had there been no heaven. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof;' and never had Bible light been flashed before the eyes or the sleeping felon to wake him from his happy dream, but that he might see the smiling form of Mercy, and hear her as she says, with pointing finger, 'Behold, I have set before thee an open door.'"

Noah's faith produced obedience; and this is always the case with true faith. He did not sit down and make excuses, instead of going to work upon the ark, as he was commanded. He might have urged the great labor and expense of building such a huge vessel; that he was no sailor, and that manned only by himself and sons, she would be quite unmanageable; that so many animals brought together would devour each, and destroy his family; but it is not the nature of faith to stagger at God's word. When God commands us to do anything, that is the highest evidence that he will give us strength to do it, if we honestly set about obeying his word. A great trial to his faith must have been the length of time that elapsed from his receiving the warning till the penalty was inflicted. In great forbearance God waited for a hundred and twenty years; waited so long that men turned his very patience into an occasion of scorn. As the ark went up in its proportions; as plank after plank was added, and still no cloud appeared in the heavens as a token of anything unusual about to take place, the

wicked doubtless made themselves merry at the expense of this fanatical preacher, as they would call him. The very men that assisted him at his work would likely beguile their toil with many a joke at his folly. But there was to be an end to all this. The day of doom came slowly but surely. God does not need to be in a hurry in carrying out his purposes; for He is from everlasting to everlasting.

All this time Noah's faith does not seem to have wavered. His trust in God was strong. We are told of Alexander the Great, that on one occasion he was sick and his physician had prepared him a potion. A short time before he had received a warning letter, telling him that this very potion was to contain poison. When the physician came with the medicine, to show how much he trusted him, what perfect confidence he had in his faithfulness, he took the cup and drank it off; while at the same time he handed him the letter. He thus trusted his life to his physician, so great was his faith in him. The faith of the believer thus confides in God, however dark the surroundings. He says, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." I have often thought of faith in the soul when looking at a ship's compass. The ship might be tossing ever so much, and the restless sea heaving, and the waves rolling beneath her; but the compass still keeps its place and maintains its level. Plunge and toss here and there the ship might, but with trembling eagerness the needle always pointed to the pole. So is faith in the soul of the believer. Cares like a wild deluge might come, and his frail vessel be driven by fierce winds; but faith steadily turns to God—to Him who can rebuke the tempest and make a great calm. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee." O how miserable are they who have no trust in God, no principle of holy confidence to comfort them amid the trials of life! Wretched their living and their dying. When Rachel, the famous tragic actress, was dying, she ordered all her jewls and trinkets to be brought to her bed-side. They were souvenirs which she had received from nearly all the crowned heads of Europe, and others of her admirers; and therefore reminded her of some of her most

brilliant triumphs. But they could give no comfort to the poor soul on the verge of eternity. She exclaimed: "Why have I to part with all this so soon?" and expired. This Queen of Tragedy, as she was called, dying without God and hope, is a sad evidence of how little the world can do for its worshipers. There is a wail of bitter despair in the last words, or among the last that she ever wrote: "In a week from now I shall begin to be devoured by the worms and the biographers."

The faith of Noah led him to an impartial obedience. "He did according to *all* that the Lord commanded him." He did not pick and choose among the commands and precepts of the Lord; obeying some and rejecting others, according as they suited his notions, his prejudices, or his interests. This is always a fruit of true faith. It asks, "Lord, *what* wouldst thou have me to do?" and as soon as it knows the Master's will it is prepared to do it, whatever hardship or sacrifice it may involve. We must be careful and conscientious in our search for the path of duty, and then be prompt in following it. When the Indians in our forests are in pursuit of an object upon which they have set their hearts, see how careful they are to discover the path or trail. They will get down upon their knees to examine every little bent twig, every faint foot-print upon the grass or the withered leaves, every slight indication of the path they should take; and when satisfied, away they go with increased speed. If Christians would get upon their knees and study their Bibles to know God's will, with the same eagerness and diligence, they would not neglect so many duties, and turn into so many forbidden paths as they do. A good man once made the remark, that religion in its beginning interests us almost entirely about ourselves; that in its progress it engages us about our fellow-men; but that in its advanced stages it leads us to consult in all things the glory and honor of God. This is what the faith of Noah led to, and what strong faith always leads to. As good old Flavel says, "Faith is the means of our spiritual livelihood and subsistence; all the other graces, like birds in a nest, depend upon what faith brings in to them. It provides our ordinary food, and our extraordinary cordials.'

It is said of Noah, that by his faith and his consistent action, "he condemned the world." This he did not only as a preacher of righteousness, but as a holy, consistent servant of the true God. Had he not uttered one word, every nail he drove in the ark would have been a condemning sound to the ungodly. As they saw him going to and fro about his work; as they saw how calmly and bravely he bore himself under their insults; and how meekly he lifted up his eyes to God for help when under peculiar troubles; it was a condemning power to their guilty consciences. It said, "God is true, though every man prove false; and upon his word I respose." In like manner sinners are still condemned by everything around them that speaks of God. The return of the holy Sabbath; the sound of the church-going bell; the open door of the sanctuary; the sight of the neglected Bible lying upon the shelf; the sound of prayer and praise floating to his ear from a neighbor's family altar; the sight of a holy man passing on the street; all speak with condemning emphasis to the guilty heart. They tell him of time wasted, privileges neglected, a precious soul degraded, and God insulted.

But the hour of vengeance has at last come. The elements of nature, at the voice of their Creator assume a gloomy aspect and come armed with destruction. It requires no great stretch of imagination to think of Noah now making his last appeal to the guilty, with trembling voice, quivering lips, and tearful eyes; nor to think of them turning away from him with louder scoffs and deeper insults than ever before. But Hark! what is that sound that arrests their departing footsteps? It is the door of the ark being shut, not by the hand of Noah nor by any of his family, but by the same hand that planted the stars in their orbits and that launches the thunderbolt. "And the Lord shut him in." Now hope is dead; the last golden opportunity past; the last appeal of love made; even God's great forbearance with that vile race is exhausted, and swift destruction cometh among them. As the waters rise higher and higher, sullenly and remorsely chasing the fleeing sinners to the highest mountains, no doubt conscience, from a lethargy deep and death-

like, sprung up into life and uttered its solemn denunciations. And as they are compelled to abandon the last spot that promised any safety; and looked abroad, as one says, "upon a shoreless ocean, that from the center to the streaming poles, tumbled round the globe;" how gladly would they have listened to one more offer of mercy from Noah's lips, or had him offer for them one prayer for mercy. But it is now for ever too late. The sweet voice of mercy was hushed amid the stern and imperative demands of justice.

Meantime how safe and secure was Noah under the protection of the Almighty! After the Lord shut the door, his foes were all left behind him and all was peace within. He was now the guest of his heavenly Friend who would permit no evil to befall him. A Divine hand was now upon the helm; an All Wise Pilot had now charge of the vessel freighted with the hope of a world. I lately read a thrilling narrative of a ship rescued from the jaws of destruction by the firmness and wisdom of a good pilot. All the canvass she could bear he spread to the gale, and amid the silence of an awful suspense he drove her close up to the foaming breakers, till all trembled in fear of instant destruction. Then at the right moment, quick as thought, he put the ship on another tack, till she approached two dark, threatening rocks, nearer and nearer, till the sea was boiling like a cauldron under her bows; but safely she passed between the rocks, and again headed toward the foaming breakers. This time she was permitted to approach so close that it seemed impossible she could be saved; but again, at the right moment, he turned the laboring and straining ship safely; and soon had her lying in the calm harbor. And no sooner was the order given to let go the anchor, than the captain sprang forward and caught the pilot in his arms; the sailors and passengers rushed up to express their gratitude; some hanging around his neck, some shaking his hands, some embracing his knees, while tears streamed over the weather-beaten faces of men that had braved untold dangers.

So we have a good Pilot who will guide us in the right way to the harbor of rest. It may seem to us, at times, as if we

were being driven upon the rocks of destruction; but that is because of our ignorance and unbelief. When the lights of our households go out one after another, and sadness and desolation gather around our hearthstones; when health fails, and business fails, and friends fail, and all around us seems hopeless; it may, for the moment, seem as if the Pilot had deserted us, and was letting our frail bark be the sport of chance, the plaything of the tempest; but it is not so. Above the hoarse roar of the storm comes the cheering voice, "It is I, be not afraid." As the devoted Judson said, "Every cup stirred by the finger of God becomes sweet to the humble believer." O believer, faint not, fear not, for the harbor is just in sight! You will soon cast your anchor within the veil, amid peace and eternal rest.

Noah's household shared the blessings conferred upon him. "Come, thou and all thy house, into the ark." It is true, religion is not a hereditary, but a personal matter. The piety of the parent cannot suffice for the child; and yet there are untold privileges connected with a godly parentage. Infinitely better to have a father rich in faith, than rich in money; with treasure laid up in heaven, than perishable treasure laid up upon earth. To have the fervent prayer of a righteous parent uttered over our cradle; the memory of a holy, pious home that sheltered our early years; and the recollection of the consistent, saintly lives of the loved ones who watched over our childhood's weakness, to carry through life with us; is infinitely better than to have riches, honors and titles descend to us with the remembrance of a godless youth, and the dreadful curse of a neglected soul. There are multitudes to-day in heaven, who were brought to Jesus in answer to the prayers of pious parents; and now united families, safe from the storms and dangers of life, they engage in the sinless worship of eternity.

Parents, are you trying to take your offspring to the ark of safety along with you? A minister tells us that when on a preaching tour at Inverness, Scotland, he was called upon to visit the cell of a murderer condemned to death. He found

him loaded with chains, and sitting upon a pallet of straw. He could not get the wretched man to look up, nor to answer a single question. When the minister asked if he wished prayer to be offered for him, he muttered his consent. The criminal's mother had been to see him only a few hours before, and to her he said, "Mother, if it had not been for you, I should not have been here!" She replied, "I'm sure I never told you to do any harm." With bitter emphasis he rejoined, "*I am sure you never told me to do any good.*" What a dreadful reproach was this to that mother, and how like a dagger it must have pierced her heart! It is not enough that the parent teaches no wrong, he must give early and timely religious instruction; made pointed and practical by a holy life.

The children of the pious are in great danger of hardening their hearts under their privileges. When our very familiarity with solemn truth and eternal things makes us indifferent to them, it is a fearful sign of coming damnation. If one of Noah's children had said, "I am sick and tired of hearing about this flood, and of the sight of that old ark; I believe it is only a delusion of father's brain; and I mean to pay no attention to what he says, and live as other people around me do," this would have been a sure sign of an abandoned soul, lost to all good; and such an one would have sunk in the angry waters under a load of aggravated guilt, enough to sink a world. Only think of sinking into hell, of spending eternity with the recollection of a mother's prayers and a father's instructions wrapped up in the soul; and counting over innumerable opportunities of salvation enjoyed but neglected, if not despised.

Let us now seek to draw some lessons from the narrative of Noah's life.

First, we learn that God's goodness, his long forbearance, and his gracious Fatherhood, will not hinder him from punishing incorrigible sinners. Some would represent God's love as being of such a nature as to exclude all punishment of sin, all acts of his impartial justice. This arises from low thoughts of God's character. They measure God by themselves and

reason as to what he ought to do, from what they think they would do themselves. This is an old mistake of humanity, and God takes notice of it with high disapprobation. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself." He alone can tell the evil of sin as committed against infinite purity; as contempt poured upon a perfectly holy law and a righteous authority. It is not for us to dictate to God what he ought or ought not to do. We are criminals in his holy sight, and when the criminal criticises the law that condemns him and calls it too strict and its penalty too severe, the wise judge does not much regard such utterances. In no government is it left to those who have broken the law to say what their punishment is to be. God is our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor. All that we have, all that we enjoy, every avenue of pleasure that we possess, we owe it all to Him. And the evil of a whole life of sin against such a Being is so great, that we can no more form an adequate conception of it, than we can measure the heavens with a span.

It is absolute folly, then, to say that God cannot punish the wicked with the pains of hell, because he is represented in the Bible as the universal Father. God is a moral Governor, as well as a Father. He is the great Lawgiver and Judge. He has holy laws to execute and sin to punish; and unless he does so his government would be at an end, and universal anarchy would rage through the universe. It is the merest driveling, therefore, to object to the punishment of hell, as revealed in the Bible, by saying, "Could a loving father see his child in torment, and yet have the power to relieve him, and not do so?" God can do many things in infinite justice that it would be wrong for us to do. It would have been wrong for Noah to have drowned one of those scoffers that mocked at him; but God drowned a world. It would have been wrong for Lot to have destroyed his sons-in-law; but God did it in strict justice. It would be wrong for us to set fire to a neighbor's house, to a ship at sea, or to a city, knowing the dreadful suffering that must ensue; but God in his providence does this, or permits it to be done, and who can impugn his righteous ways?

It would be wrong for any man to undermine a neighbor's house, so that he and his family would be buried in the ruins; but God sends his earthquakes rumbling through the deep foundations of nature, and buries thousands in the *debris*. Is not God, therefore, a God of love? Certainly he is; but he has a vast universe to govern in justice and wisdom; and never do we act more absurdly than when we undertake to judge of Him by ourselves.

Another lesson we may learn is, that God has provided an ark of safety for sinners now, into which they may flee and be safe. There is a New Testament ark as well as an Old Testament one. We, like Noah, are warned of God of coming judgments. We are told of a day of vengeance, a day of wrath, that is sure to come upon the ungodly. The Lord is coming in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel. And because in infinite mercy he delays his coming, to give the world a longer space for repentance, sinners infer from this that he is not coming at all. In the public papers, and in every haunt of sin, as well as in many of the halls of science, so called, men curl their lips with scorn at the warnings given them, and utter many a jest, and pen many a witty paragraph, at the expense of those who warn them of the coming King and the coming doom. But this is nothing new. It is as old as sin. It is false as the father of lies. It ruined the old world; it will ruin you.

Sinner! I invite you to an ark of safety. You do not require to build it, it is built already. You do not need to wait one moment, it is finished and perfect. To enter it is no doubtful experiment, for it has already saved millions; it can save you. That ark is the atonement of the Lord Jesus. The moment you enter it you will have peace and assurance. You will *know* that you are safe. Did not Noah feel confident that he was safe when God shut him in? Some professing Christians walk in doubt and uncertainty, and call it humility. They grope in the darkness of unbelief, and then give their doubts and tormenting fears a holy name; thus calling their evil good. But the Gospel does not, by a single word, encourage doubt or

uncertainty. It brings, when believed, not trouble, but peace; not anxiety but rest. It enables the soul to come and claim his sonship, and to take his place joyfully in the family of God. A missionary in India once knelt beside a dying man, whom he supposed was still in the darkness of heathenism, and whispered in his ear, "What is your hope?" The dying man, with a great effort, said: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Having uttered these words, he laid down his head and died. The missionary wondered where he could have got this knowledge; but as he looked at the body he saw a piece of paper grasped tightly in one of the hands. It was carefully taken out, and proved to be a single leaf of the Bible on which the above words were found. This precious soul had found the ark of safety.

There is room for all in that ark. None need stay away because they are sinners. It was for such it was made. Our sins are our only qualification to enter it. Our only merit is our demerit. You may know all about this ark, but that will not save you. You may go round it and be able to tell its dimensions and count every plank; but only those who are *in* the ark are to be saved. O sinner, enter now! The Judge is at the door. Already we can hear the sound of his chariot-wheels. Convulsions and revolutions, uproar and confusion among the nations of the earth, herald his approach.

Noah's ark landed him safely on Mount Ararat, but the ark of salvation will land us on the Mount of Glory. There, amid scenes of unimagined blessedness, we shall look over the way that the Lord has led us; and in that blessed city, that heavenly Jerusalem, that metropolis of the universe, praise God forever for our happy and blood-bought home.

"If my bark be strong,
  If my anchor sure,
Then let billow upon billow beat,
  Am I not secure?
On the dreariest, wildest sea,
What are winds to me?

"Up between the stars
Spreads night's tranquil blue;
Not one ruffle, not one wrinkle there
Blots the changeless hue,
Storms of earth for earth are given;
But they reach not heaven!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### ABRAHAM. THE FRIEND OF GOD.

"THIS is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The world has become the seat of sin, a mass of pollution, and therefore, the enemy of God and the soul of man. The world lieth in wickedness, and is not to be loved, nor yielded to by the Christian, but to be overcome. His position towards it is to be one of war; of keen, stern, relentless antagonism. He must either overcome it, or it will overcome him. Fight he must; and there can be no peace, not even a truce, till a complete victory enables him to lay his armor by.

Now, the conquering principle in this conflict is faith. Weak and feeble it may be, but if it is the right kind, that which comes from God, it will take hold of the strength of God, and can never be conquered. A wild and furious tempest may destroy the light-house, which is only man's work; but it cannot extinguish the lights which God's own hand has hung up in the heavens. The man who sets about conquering the world in the strength of his own resolution, or his intellectual might, or with science or knowledge, will soon find himself lying among the heaps of its slain and vanquished victims. But he who goes into the field with the shield of faith, comes off more than conqueror. Nothing more than faith is needed; and nothing less will do. We might have armies of vast multitude, and navies of massive power, to fight for us; but their aid would avail us nothing in this conflict. Even an angel-host could not help us here. Faith alone can make us invincible, and enable us to stand in the evil day steadfast and immovable.

It is not in itself that faith has such an all overcoming power. Its power consists in the fact, that it places us under

the protection of Jehovah. "Trust in the Lord forever," it says; "for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." Faith, then, teaches us to lean on his strength, to trust his arm, to shelter under his power, and to draw all our comfort from his promises. No wonder, then, that it has such potency in the conflict with the world; for "if God be for us, who can be against us?" The sister of Mathew Henry, the commentator, had the following entry in her diary: "Resolved to call nothing mine but God." There is where faith takes its firm holds, and all the convulsions of earth cannot shake them off.

We come now to consider the life of a man remarkable for his faith; Abraham, the father of the faithful. In him we may see faith, not as a mere abstraction, but embodied in a living form, in the person of a man of like passions with ourselves, and encompassed with uncommon trials; and yet confiding in God in the darkest hour. His faith was not confined to great occasions; it was not dependent upon the gaze of the world, nor the applause of men; it reached its most sublime height when alone with God in the darkness of the night, listening to a command that must have thrilled his whole being. Indeed, his faith grew by the severity of the trials to which it was subjected. It has often been a cause of wonder, that good men, those who were very near and very dear to God, men like Abraham, that the Lord in gracious condescension called friend, should yet be the objects of such terrible trials. But that is one of God's ways of purifying them, and making them distinguished examples of his grace.

And though no amount of holy intimacy with God, no attainments in piety, no Christian graces, however brilliant, can exempt us from trials as long as we are in this world; there comes along with them the promise, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." This is very comprehensive. Things bright and things dark; events that seem to smile upon us with prosperity, and those that frown with adversity; periods of sunshine and happiness, and then dark days and starless nights; things that seem to bless and things that seem to curse; all shall work for our good. Abraham,

ABRAHAM PREPARING TO OFFER UP ISAAC.

living amid such a dark dispensation, and yet showing such a strong faith, should make us ashamed of our unbelief and cause the prayer to leap from our lips, "Lord, increase our faith."

The first striking instance of Abraham's faith that we are called upon to notice, is the call to leave his home and kindred, and go forth not knowing whither he went. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." This man of God was now seventy-five years of age, and had no doubt formed many warm attachments in his native land, that it would require great sacrifices to give up. But his confidence in God led him to obey the Divine call at once. He did not sit still and ask questions about the land that he was promised. He did not ask if it was a fertile country, with a salubrious climate, and abundance of cattle upon its hills, and plenty of precious ores in its mines? He did not ask if the scenery was beautiful and picturesque? It was enough for him, that God bid him go, assured that there is no place so safe nor so happy for a man as the place where God would have him to be.

God often makes such calls upon his people now, not in an audible voice from the heavens, but by his Word and his providences. Whenever duty to God and to truth require us to leave family and friends, the most lucrative business or profession, all that is pleasant and profitable, we should obey at once. Of course, we should not yield to mere fanatical impulses or romantic notions; but by prayer and the study of the Word of God, find out what is duty and resolutely pursue it. Here is a young man of decided talent. He has entered upon a business career that in a few years promises him wealth and honors. But the call of God comes, to leave all and enter upon the life of a missionary. Is he willing to leave home and friends wealth and honor, and go to inhospitable climes and among rude and barbarous tribes, amid poverty and danger, to preach Christ crucified? Will he do all this cheerfully and perseveringly, counting his loss his gain, and glorying in his work?

If so, he is actuated by Abraham's faith and shall have his reward.

And the records of the church of God in modern times has many such noble examples. Here is a fair daughter of fond parents, well educated, upon whom the rough winds of adversity have not been permitted to blow. She has a home of elegance and comfort, and is the center of a large circle of loving and loved friends. But God's voice calls her to go from home and country and all the refinements of the society in which she moves, to dwell in lands of dark heathenism, and to endure untold privations and sufferings. And by faith she obeys; living only to honor God and leaving her dust in the distant land from which her soul triumphantly ascended to glory. These are public examples of the power of faith; but there are tens of thousands of God's children equally truthful and obedient in the walks of private life.

Abraham's faith had yet another trial to encounter in connection with his leaving his home. When he got to the land promised, he found that the Canaanites were still there, that it was yet a land of great wickedness and idolatry, and that so little could he call the land his, that he had even to buy a grave in it. Is this the land flowing with milk and honey, that the Lord had spoken of? It looked very unlike it, as yet; but still he clung to the promise. Faith can afford to wait upon God. Our prayers and our faith are not always met in the way we expected. It is ours to trust; it is God's to answer in the way his sovereign pleasure sees best. The father of the faithful possesses his soul in patience. He does not wish that he had never left the land of the Chaldeans, that he had never left the loved scenes of his youth. No, even when trouble after trouble came upon him in the strange land, when his father died, and the famine brought him to the brink of starvation, his trust never seems to have wavered for a moment.

He does not interpret God's word by God's providences, but the reverse of this. And this is a most important point for us all. The providences may be dark and puzzling, and sometimes judging from them we might think that God was going

to give us up to the enemy; but faith looks to the promise and knows that the providences are for his good, although he cannot now see it. If Job had looked at the promises in the light of the providences with which he was encompassed, he would have come to the same conclusion as some of his friends, that God had forsaken him and was now his enemy. But he did not do so. He clung to his anchorage on the promises, and soon he saw that the God of the promises and the God of Providence is the same. He may send Abraham into the famine, and he may send John to the barren island of Patmos; but he will be there to meet them. "My presence will go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Some one has compared faith to a foundation laid deep and strong in the Rock of ages, and hope as the beautiful tapering spire which rises upon that foundation, penetrates the sky, and is illuminated by the first beams of the rising, and the last rays of the setting sun.

After a time the course of Providence with Abraham changed, and prosperity took the place of adversity. Riches began to pour in upon him. Lot, his nephew, also increased in riches. But as riches increase they bring an increase of care, and often of sorrow. These two good men, who had dwelt together in harmony and comfort in years of hardship and trial, were on the verge of being brought into an unseemly strife by their increasing possessions. Alas! in how many families have the fires of unholy passion, and envy, and strife, broken out in words of bitter hatred, even over the dead body of a father, about the division of the property. As my object is not to write a life of Abraham, but to notice those points in his history in which his faith stands out prominently, I cannot dwell here, but only refer to his noble, generous, yielding spirit, as a proof of the heavenly nature of his faith. A living faith always brings forth good works and by this alone is its divine origin proven. How we admire the kind, tender, judicious temper of this great man, as he says to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, and between thy herdmen and my herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee,

from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

How easily the flames of a long and unseemly contention could have been fanned up on this occasion. An obstinate tenaciousness of purpose, a swaggering, self-conceited determination to gain the victory, a proud, haughty craving for superiority, under the pretense of standing up for just rights, could have made of this a life-long quarrel. For want of the conciliatory spirit here manifested many a church has been rent by division, and the cause of truth made a by-word and a reproach among the wicked. "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" and it is the spirit of true religion to be "kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor prefering one another."

But I come now to notice a still more striking proof of Abraham's faith. The spirit of faith is always the spirit of prayer and intercession. Faith in God will produce converse with God and a deep anxiety for perishing souls around us.

The narrative of Abraham's intercession on behalf of guilty Sodom, opens with a lovely picture of hospitality. The sun is in his noon-day splendor, and all nature seems to languish in his vertical rays. The flocks and their herdsmen seek the shade of some lofty over-hanging rock or some broad-leaved tree. The father of the faithful is sitting in the door of his tent looking out upon the calm face of nature, and with a heart at peace with the God on whose works he gazes. A hundred years have passed over his head, and have left him still active in every good work, and rich in experience of his Lord's faithfulness.

He had not sat there long till three men, strangers to him as far as he could see, made their appearance. With the alacrity of a young man, and with kind consideration for the wants of the strangers, he runs out to meet them and shows them the utmost courtesy. With the aid of his good wife an ample repast is soon provided for them, as they sit in the cooling shade, and he stands respectfully beside them while

they partake of his hospitality. To some this might seem a very little matter; but God took notice of it and gives it an honorable record in His Book; and a thousand years after it is referred to by an inspired Apostle, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." What must have been the amazement of the Patriarch when he made the discovery that one of these visitors was the Lord of Glory! The same who had appeared to him before in comforting assurances and gracious promises. And how must his heart have rejoiced when from the same lips was given him the promise of a son, in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed.

The visitors now turn their faces toward Sodom and Abraham accompanies them. The Lord discloses to him that the object of approaching that vile city was one of wrath and vengeance. The cry of their iniquity had come up before the Lord, and now his sword of vengeance is in his hand; but before the stroke descends the man of faith begins to pray. As the adorable Saviour from the mount of Olives looked down on the doomed city of Jerusalem and wept over it, so the patriarch looked down upon these cities of the plain with deep anguish, and begins to plead for them. Ah! there may be some hope for them yet, for along with the cry of their blasphemy and their foul crimes, there has begun to go up the prayer of faith. It is a startling sign of a sinner's state when good people have stopped praying for him—when, discouraged, they cease to expect God to hear. "I once had a pious sister that prayed for me," said a young man, "but she is dead, and I have no one to pray for me now!" Sodom has one yet to plead for her, one who no doubt had done so before; but alas! he is now offering the last prayer that will ever go up for her salvation.

Prayer is an awfully solemn act at all times, but in the case of Abraham it was peculiarly so. He was in the personal presence of the Lord. Yonder was the guilty multitude, among whom he had some friends and acquaintances, and above them the cloud of wrath hung suspended. And, O how

glorious does the man of God appear as, rising from the dust of humility, he begins to plead! Great things depend on that one prayer. If *it* does not avail to save the cursed city, nothing else can. The city might be surrounded with mighty armies, led by the most skillful generals, but one flake of the Almighty wrath would have consumed them. They would have melted away like snow-flakes falling into a fiery furnace. They might have surrounded their city with the strongest fortresses, and with a wall of iron; but all would have been, before the breath of the Lord, like great heaps of chaff before a whirlwind. Prayer is the only instrumentality now to which any hope can be attached in this case.

And it is a delightful study to notice the heavenly art with which this good man orders his cause before God. The Divine Spirit, then as well as now, made intercession within good men, and imparted to them that holy sagacity and heavenly skill in presenting their case before the Lord, that made them mighty in prayer. Abraham takes a humble position in the Divine presence; "I have taken upon me to speak to God, who am but dust and ashes." He speaks as if he were an inhabitant of the guilty city, and were pleading for his own life as well as that of his neighbors. He prayed as a guilty man pleading for guilty men. There was nothing of the "I am holier than thou" feeling about him.

Then, as a proof of his confidence in the Lord, it is said that he drew near;" just as we have seen a loving child draw near to his father, when he has an important request to present. He also expresses the utmost confidence in the righteous and merciful government of God; "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?". He well knew how guilty Sodom had become; how loud was the cry for vengeance which her sins for many long, rebellious years had sent up to heaven; but he also knew that the mercy of God was above the heavens, and he took his stand upon that ground.

This prayer evinces great love for perishing souls. He had a loathing—an intense hatred for their sins; but at the same time a deep love for the sinners. Could his tears or even his

blood have saved them, they would have been freely given. This was the truly Christ-like spirit. It reminds us of Jesus pleading for his revilers, nay, even his murderers; hating their sins, and yet loving their souls with a depth of love that we can form no conception of in our most spiritual moments.

It was this spirit of love for their souls that made Abraham so importunate in his prayer, and so persevering. He asks not merely once, but many times. He rises in his requests as the Lord condescends to answer him, till he gains the assurance that the city will be spared if even *ten* righteous persons can be found in it. He charitably hopes that at least that number might be found there; but alas! no; there is not even that little quantity of salt in the midst of the general corruption. He had not pleaded for the sake of the wicked, for, as Mathew Henry says, "Wickedness shuts the mouth of intercession.' And when he found that there was such a general, almost universal moral pollution in Sodom, he ceased to plead. "And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham. The doom of the city is now sealed. The only righteous person there is saved by miraculous power, in answer to Abraham's intercession; and then the wrath of God falls upon the guilty. How glorious to think of Christ as our ever living Intercessor, appearing in the presence of God for us! It is good to have a pious neighbor to plead for us: but oh, how infinitely better to have the Divine Advocate to undertake our case and plead our cause! Blessed are they who have such a Friend in court.

We come now to consider the great trial of Abraham's faith, the call to offer up his son. When he was well advanced in years he was cheered by the promise of a son, a promise that was fulfilled to him in the hundredth year of his eventful life We can in some measure imagine the joy of this old couple as they held this precious gift of Heaven in their arms; and raised their tearful eyes to heaven in gratitude. And we can conceive of the tender love with which they would surround one in whom so many hopes were centered. He has at last passed through all the perils of childhood and youth, and has

reached a vigorous manhood; when the same voice that had spoken to Abraham in the land of Ur, comes again with a most startling communication. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Can we imagine anything, under the circumstances, more trying than this? We have seen that he had a firm faith in God's veracity, and unshaken trust in the Divine faithfulness; but will his confidence stand such a shock as this? Yes; even now he staggers not through unbelief. He feels shut up to but one course, and that is obedience to the good and perfect will of the Most High. It is true, that for the time his brightest hopes are blasted, his plans, in regard to the dear youth, are all crushed; but he was confident that his Lord's promises would all be fulfilled to him, even if it were by raising Isaac up from the dead. That must have been a memorable night in the history of the Patriarch. We may well believe that sleep was driven from his pillow; and that, as he thought of that bright young man, who had been so long the light of his home, the joy of his heart, stretched out before him a bloody corpse, tried nature would extort many a groan. Of his breaking the matter to Sarah, and of the parting of the son with the loving mother, nothing is said; but silence is here true eloquence.

We can imagine many things that Abraham might have said, many arguments that he might have urged to excuse himself from this painful duty. But he said nothing. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it." His obedience was prompt. Early in the morning he rose and made preparation for his long journey. He does not say, "I will consider the matter a few weeks or months." He does not go round to his pious friends and ask their advice upon this important point. He felt sure that it was the plain command of God which he heard, and that is enough for him. I have heard people say when there was a plain duty before them, "I do not feel like doing this." As if their feelings were to be

the standard of right, and not the plainly revealed will of heaven. If Abraham had acted on this principle he would have made no movement towards the Mount of sacrifice. Such a principle, if acted upon, would strike with paralysis the whole framework of active, pious enterprise. True faith asks nothing more than a "Thus saith the Lord;" and upon that it leans for support.

Abraham's obedience was persevering. He sets forth upon a three days' journey; so that if he had started under the influence of a sudden impulse, there was ample time for it to cool under the influence of mature reflection. But the principle under which he started, was faith in God; and that, like its source, is immutable. We may waver and falter in the path of duty, because of the weakness of our nature; but so far as we have faith at all, it takes hold of the unchanging God, and cannot be carried about by every wind. At last, on the third day, "Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off." Mount Moriah burst upon his view, the same Mount upon which, many ages after, Solomon built a temple to the Lord. Here, having told his servants to abide at the foot of the Mount, he and his son climb its rugged sides; the son carrying the wood for the burnt offering, while the father has in his hands the fire and the knife.

The summit is reached, and we can imagine that we see the man of God stand in deep reflection, with a countenance solemn and sad. The silence is broken by the voice of the son: "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the Lamb for a burnt offering?" O, how these words must have wrung the heart of the father with unspeakable anguish! But commanding his voice, though it may be with quivering lips, he replies, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." As Isaac was now twenty-five years of age, according to the best calculation, he must have been informed of the command of God, and have yielded to it a calm acquiesence.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, presents us with the remarks made by the father to the son on this occasion, which as they are not found in the Book of God, are only imaginary; and yet

are so pathetic and natural that they deserve to be quoted :— "O my son, begged of God in a thousand prayers, and at length unexpectedly obtained ; ever since you were born, with what tenderness and solicitude have I brought you up ! Proposing to myself no higher felicity than to see you become a man, and to leave you the heir of my possessions. But the God who bestowed you upon me demands you again. Prepare, then, to yield the sacrifice with alacrity. I give you up to him who, at all seasons and in all situations, has prosecuted us with loving-kindness and tender mercy. You came into the world under the necessity of dying; and the manner of your death is to be singular and illustrious, presented in sacrifice by your own father to the great Father of all ; who, we may presume, considers it as unfit and unbecoming that you should depart out of this life by disease, in war, or by any other of the usual calamities to which human nature is subject, but who waits to receive your spirit as it leaves the body, amidst the prayers and vows of your affectionate parent, that he may place it in perfect blessedness with himself. There you shall still be the consolation and support of my old age, not indeed by your presence and conversation, but bequeathing me, when you depart, the presence and the blessing of the Almighty." To this Isaac is represented as answering : "I should be unworthy of life were I capable of showing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar, how much more when my heavenly Father re-demands his own ?"

See Isaac, then, bound upon the altar. The father's hand is lifted up and firmly grasping the glittering blade, when the voice from heaven at once arrests the descending blow. "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him." God had indeed provided himself a lamb for a burnt offering. A ram was seen caught in a thicket by the horns ; and with what overflowing gratitude must that offering have been presented by both father and son ! The descent from that Mount was a joyful one.

This narrative has been much criticised by infidels; and there seems to me to be, on the part of some Christian writers, an unnecessary haste to rush in with supposed reasons, and seeming apologies for the Divine conduct. Who are we that we should set ourselves up to explain God's motives for doing this, or not doing that! The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, needs not our explanations and our apologies for his conduct. We are to examine the evidences that He gives us that the Bible is a revelation from Himself. And these are full and overpowering. They are such as have defied the attacks of infidelity in every age; and now, amid the light of the present century, stand firmer than ever. These evidences are such as to convince any honest mind, when candidly examined, that the Bible is a revelation to man from God; and having received it as such, let us believe its teachings and facts, whether we can understand the reasons for them or not. It seems to me beneath the dignity of truth to run after every empty caviler with explanations, and almost apologies, for Jehovah's acts. And generally its only result is to build them up in their pride and to make them think themselves of immense consequence. Let it be ours, like Abraham, to believe because God has spoken; knowing that many things that must be dark to our puny minds, are bright and clear to the Divine wisdom.

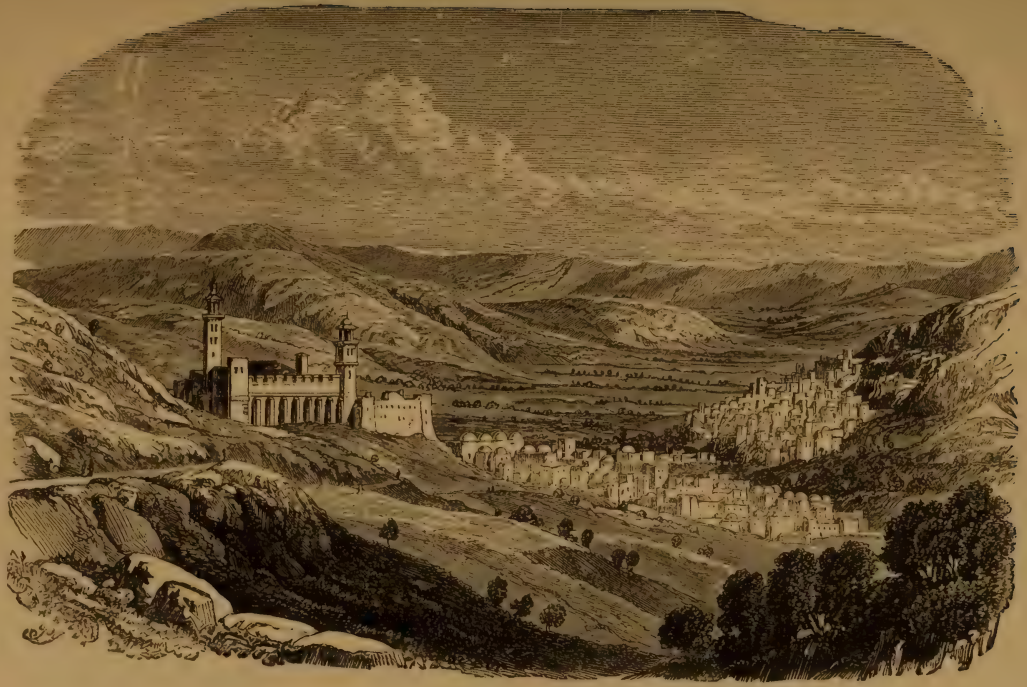
It is on the same principle that some are ready to gather up every little crumb of praise that certain distinguished men, many of them very bad men, choose to drop in favor of Christianity. One vile sinner, a man of great talent, no doubt, uttered a few words of praise of Christ's character; and a fallen and exiled warrior, who never seems to have cared for any God but himself, does the same; and their remarks are taken up and reiterated, as if Christianity and its Author were laid under great obligation to these men for their condescending praise We are told of a great statesman, who perhaps never prayed in his life, expressing his admiration for the Lord's prayer as a wonderful composition; and of a great poet and a great sinner, too, extolling the pure morality of the Bible. All this

subserviency to wicked and infidel men is uncalled for. God will vindicate his own character, and carry on his own cause, without going to the devil's servants to borrow capital for that purpose. "Is not my word a fire and a hammer? saith the Lord." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit"

We have seen the power and triumph of faith in leading Abraham to give up his own will to the will of God All sin consists in opposition to that will; while, on the other hand, all holiness is to be found in a ready obedience to the known will of Jehovah. It is especially in our will that our individuality lies; and when that is given up to our Heavenly Father, it carries the whole power of the soul with it. Man may wish to make some reserve, and think that he can be religious without such an entire surrender of his whole will to God, but the faith that works by love, leads the soul to say, "I am not my own; I am bought with a price." It is willing at the command of God, to bring forth its beloved Isaacs and bind them upon the altar of sacrifice. The trial may be severely felt. it may tear its way through every fiber of his nature, but faith and love enable him to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done"

When the patriarch returned home with his son still alive, with the approving voice of God sounding in his ears, and his own conscience echoing that voice, we would be ready to say that his troubles are now all over. He is rich in worldly goods, his domestic relations are happy, and it seems as if a serene old age is closing in upon him without a single cloud in his sky But life to all is a mixed state, a state of joys and sorrows, of pains and pleasures, of sunshine and cloud, of storm and calm. The Lord has still in reserve for his aged servant sorrows and trials, to keep his faith vigorous and bright, and to make him feel that earth is not his home, and to lead him to look more earnestly for that "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Accordingly we find that one day there is great sorrow in the vale of Memre. The face of the father of the faithful is heavy with sorrow. Death has entered his happy dwelling, and he stands gazing in speechless anguish upon the fixed and placid



HEBRON.

features of his dead wife. Yes, the loved one who had been so long the light of his dwelling, who had come with him from her native land, who had been his faithful companion alike in poverty and riches, who had shared with him his wanderings and his trials, and had been the earthly comfort of his life, now sleeps her last, long sleep. We do not hear that he wept when the sacrifice of his son was demanded; but he weeps now And those tears are honorable to him, and a silent tribute to the worth of the loved one that is gone. Gloomy to him now are the scenes of Kerjath-arba.

There are few sights more affecting than the utter sadness and desolation of an old man, when the wife of his youth is taken away. He feels that a part of himself is gone. Others may be kind, but the one that understood all his ways and anticipated all his wants, is gone; and he sits for hours in a helpless kind of state, gazing at the vacant chair. And when we are told that he has soon been called to join the loved one in heaven, we heave a sigh of relief.

In commenting upon Abraham's faith, the apostle Paul says: "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He then goes on in a most masterly argument to prove that faith, not works, is the only method of justification before God. He shows that if he was justified by works he would have had something in which to glory before God; but that, being justified by faith, his salvation was all of grace, and consequently cut off all possibility of glorying in self. Abraham was not merely the father and head of the Israelitish people according to the flesh, but he was the head of a spiritual people, that is such as had his faith. "They who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." In our Lord's days on earth, he met with many self-deceivers, who, building upon a hereditary religion, supposed they were safe because they had Abraham for their father; but our adorable Savior rebuked them in the terrible words, "Ye are of your father the Devil, for his works ye do." It was revealed to the Patriarch that a descendant of his, according to the flesh, was to be the Savior of the world. He

believed in that promised Savior, and was justified through that faith; and so are all who have the same faith. The revelation was dim and indistinct, but notwithstanding he saw Christ's day, though afar off, and was glad. He believed simply because God had promised. That was the only ground he had to rest upon, for everything of an outward kind was against his faith.

If Abraham had such firm faith, even amid the dark and shadowy dispensation in which he lived, how should this rebuke the unbelief of those who live amid the blaze of Gospel light! The gospel trumpet blows in the ear of the slumbering sinner, many a warning blast; but he heeds them not. Faith is the same now that it ever was. The truth to be believed is the same. The hell to be escaped from is the same. The Savior that alone can save from sin and its consequence, is the same. But the light we possess now is so much brighter, the means of grace are so much more abundant, the calls to flee from the wrath to come are so much more pressing, that he who rejects them all, will go into eternity with a load of guilt upon his soul so deep and damning that we feel lost amid the very horror of the thought!

"I worship Thee, sweet will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live I long
To love Thee more and more

"Man's weakness waiting upon God,
It's end can never miss;
For man on earth no work can do
More angel-like than this.

"He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

"Ill, that God blesses, is our good,
And unblest good is ill,
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be his dear will!

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison-walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee."

## CHAPTER V.

### ISAAC. THE CHILD OF PROMISE.

Abraham died and was gathered to his people. "One generation passeth away, and another cometh." Such is the law of our being, and from it there is no appeal. We find ourselves surrounded by the monuments of past generations, and know assuredly that we are hastening on to join them in their long sleep of death. Abraham, after his busy life of care and trial, sleeps in death beside his beloved Sarah; every jarring sound hushed, every storm blown over, and resting in hope of a blessed resurrection. The dust of God's saints is precious in his sight, and is safely guarded under the care of his Omnipotence. Whether they repose in their ancestral sepulchers, or in far distant lands, laid in their graves by stranger hands, whether they sink into ocean's unfathomable depths, or are reduced to ashes by devouring fire; at the appointed time their Lord shall bring them forth in glory and honor.

Abraham is laid to rest in the cave of Machpelah. The grave that he bought from strangers is all that remains to him As Dr. Bonar says:

"Only a tomb, no more!
A rock-hewn sepulcher,
And this, and this is all that's thine,
Fair Canaan's mighty heir!

"Only a tomb, no more!
A future resting-place,
When God shall lay thee down, and bid
All thy long wanderings cease.

"This cave and field,—no more,—
Canst thou thy dwelling call;
That land of thine,—plains, hills, woods, streams,—
The stranger has it all!

"Thy altar and thy tent
Are all that thou hast here;
With these content, thou passest on,
A homeless wanderer

"Thy life unrest and toil;
Thy course a pilgrimage;
Only in death thou goest down,
To claim thy heritage;—

"A heritage which death
Shall seal to thee for aye,
A resurrection-heritage
When all things pass away.

"A home of endless peace,
Beyond these hills of strife;
When these old rocks give up their dead,
And death shall end in life.

"A heritage of life,
Beyond this guarded gloom,
A kingdom, not a field or cave:
A city, not a tomb"

The expression, "gathered unto his people," is one which is often used regarding the good men of the Bible. It has been commonly supposed to mean being buried with their kindred; but it has a far higher meaning than this. In this sense it would not apply to Abraham at all, for his people and he were buried far from each other The same expression is applied to Jacob when he died in Egypt, and it is applied also to Moses, though buried in an unknown grave. It refers, no doubt, to the gathering of happy souls in heaven; to the immediate and happy reunion of those friends who had for a short time been separated by death. It was the waiting and joyous host of glorified spirits in heavenly mansions, to whom they were gathered, when the burden of life was laid down, and the body went to the tomb. It has been complained that there is but little evidence of immortality being known in those early days; but it should be remembered, that not having a written revelation, the Lord Jesus, in a bodily appearance of some kind, showed himself to his servants and spoke with them; and that

angels often communicated with men, so that a constant intercourse was kept up between heaven and earth. They walked with God, they lived near heaven and knew that there was but a thin veil between them and the souls of their departed friends.

Compared with his father, and his son Jacob, there is but little known of Isaac. He was not called to pass through any very stirring scenes, and therefore does not fill a large place in the sacred history. He was not a man of much force of character, nor of much power of intellect. He had a plastic, yielding, amiable disposition; easily acted upon by others, and but too ready to be governed by those that he ought to have governed.

But he was a devoutly pious man. The pious example of his parents, as well as their instructions, were not lost upon him. His father was one who knew how to train up children for heaven, as we learn from Divine testimony. "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." And where this is done, it is a rare case when children are not converted to God early in life.

On this point the Rev. Richard Cecil, speaking from experience, says, "Where parental influence does not convert, it hampers, it hangs on the wheels of evil. I had a pious mother, who dropped things in my way: I could never rid myself of them. I was a professed infidel; but then I liked to be an infidel in company, rather than alone. I was wretched when by myself. These principles, maxims, and data, spoiled my jollity. With my companions I could sometimes stifle them; like embers, we kept one another warm. Besides, I was here a sort of hero. I had beguiled several of my associates into my opinions, and I had to maintain a character before them. But I could not divest myself of my better principles. Parental influence thus cleaves to a man; it harasses him—it throws itself continually in his way. My mother would talk to me, and weep as she talked. I flung out of the house with an oath, but wept when I got into the street. Sympathy is the power-

ful engine of a mother; it is of incalculable importance to obtain a hold on the conscience; children have a conscience, and it is not seared, though it is evil. Bringing the eternal world into their view—planning and acting with that world before us,—thus gains at length such a hold on them, that, with all the infidel poison which they may afterwards imbibe, there are few children who at night in their chamber—in the dark—in a storm of thunder, will not fear. They recollect that ETERNITY which stands in their way. It rises up before them; it goads them; it thunders in their ears."

Isaac chose early the religion of heaven—that which is good for body and soul, for the old and for the young, for the rich and for the poor, for time and for eternity. There are many who are greatly alarmed at any unusual display of devotedness on the subject of religion. They will speak in the most rapturous terms of a devoted friend, a devoted patriot, a man devoted to the interests of science and education, but a man wholly devoted to God and to the promotion of his truth in the world, they are ready to set down as the victim of a weak delusion, if not of a pernicious fanaticism. The reason is, the enmity of their hearts to spiritual things, and the blinding influence of sin. The things that are seen and are temporal fill up their whole little field of vision. They grope about in the darkness of a mere animal existence, totally unappreciative of the eternal realities and the surpassing glories which God spreads out before the eye of faith.

In seeking after a likeness of God and entire conformity to his will; in giving attention to things infinite and eternal; in trying to save immortal souls, and win a crown of glory that fades not away; how is it possible for us to be too earnest? See what a holy earnestness marked our Lord's career from the manger to the cross. Like a sacred flame it glowed in his bosom and kept him continually busy for the salvation of the world—preaching, praying, weeping, working, never loitering. How carefully every moment was laid out in his Father's business! So devoted was he to the work he had undertaken, so eager for the salvation of men, that he longed for his great

baptism of blood—for all the big waves and billows of God's wrath that sinners deserved, to go over him. He made haste to the work of suffering for us, and was almost impatient for the dark hour of sacrifice to arrive. Even the designs of the guilty traitor, Judas, seemed too slow for his longings of love, for he said, "What thou doest do quickly." The apostles caught up the same spirit of their Divine Master, and turned the world upside down by the fiery fervor of their zeal. Steady as the sun in the heavens, they went on to the accomplishment of their great work, and as has been said, "struck the kingdom of darkness with blows that resounded through the universe."

Everything, however, is not Christian earnestness that passes under that name. There is often an earnestness of mere sympathy that is awakened by contact with others. We are greatly influenced, at least for a time, by those with whom we associate. To some extent we catch their spirit, imitate their actions, and sometimes the very tones of their voice. For example, here is a young convert, and circumstances lead him into connection with a church where, in their meetings, they shout and clap their hands, and loudly respond to the petitions expressed in the public prayers; in short, are very demonstrative in the expression of their feeling. He soon learns to do as the others do; not because of his religion, for if that was the case then all who had real religion would do the same; but simply by the power of sympathy with those with whom he associates. Had circumstances carried the same man into connection with the evangelical Society of Friends, he would have been ready to sit for hours in meeting without a word being spoken either by himself or others. And yet he might have as much real religious earnestness in the one case as in the other.

There is also an earnestness that is merely constitutional. It is born with the man. There is a warmth and a fiery fervor about all that he says and does. There is certain animal excitement which he throws into all that he undertakes, and which surrounds him with a perpetual tempest. Now, there is no religion in all this. It is true, religion may take hold of his

natural temperament, and sanctify and direct it, and make it extensively useful; just as religion takes the caution and cool deliberation of the more lymphatic temperament, and makes them useful. Still there is much that goes by the name of religious earnestness, in such persons, that is only the result of nature, not of grace—of feeling, not of principle.

There is also a zeal of mere sentimentality. It will only work for Jesus when a romantic glow—a publicity and distinction attend upon the work. If they could act in the eyes of the world, if they could encounter great perils, and come out of them spoken of as great heroes; recorded as such in poetry and sermon and public speeches, with what an ambitious burst of zeal would they go into Christ's service. But to live unknown, to suffer and sacrifice, and toil on for Jesus, till we die unhonored and unknown; and receive almost our first word of approval from the lips of Jesus himself, as we stand before his throne, requires solid principle, not mere sentiment. Yet faith teaches us that every act of love, every kind word, every tear dropped, every prayer uttered for Jesus, reports itself before the splendor of the eternal throne. The timid word spoken for the Savior in the midst of mocking folly, is heard by him in heaven above the sound of seven thunders. It is registered in heaven's imperishable record.

True religious earnestness is fed from the unfailing fountain of love to God. There is more felt inwardly than is represented outwardly. It lives not by the breath of human applause, but by the favor of God. At the cross it sees the whole truths of the Bible, the revelation of God to man for centuries, condensed into one,word—salvation,—and that a free salvation; then it sees the long procession of lost souls as they go to their eternal prison-house, and is roused to work while he may to save those yet in the land of hope. Onward such a man goes, in his career of usefulness; Christ interceding above him, the Holy Spirit interceding within him, the heavenly Jerusalem to which he goes, with its pearly gates and golden streets shining before him, and crying to a mocking world, "O, flee from the wrath to come!"

There is a little incident mentioned in the history of the patriarch that shows us one source of his deep piety. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide." What a beautiful picture of a good man holding fellowship with God through his works. As the dusky twilight creeps over the face of nature, and a sweet stillness and repose settling down upon all things around him, deep thoughts of the future and of eternal things fill his mind; and as some of the silent stars begin to appear, he feels with the Psalmist, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

The age in which we live is one of many and blessed activities for Christ. The Word of God, that blessed Book whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, is circulated by millions. Missionaries are sent to every land, and toil on amid hardships and dangers, showing that the martyr-spirit has not died out. The habitations of sin and festering moral pollution are entered by the message of salvation, and from a darkness worse than that of heathenism, millions of children are gathered, and the light of heaven poured upon their dark minds. We live in a wonderful age, and should bless God for what our eyes see and our ears hear of the Lord's goodness.

But there is one great peril we are in from the very nature of our age. There is not enough of secret religion. Like Isaac, we should be in meditation and prayer and self-examination, alone before the Searcher of hearts. There is a rush and a bustle and an excitement about our religious efforts, that is apt to make us forget God, at the very time we are speaking of him and engaged in his work. In our large cities, especially, there are thousands of the most active Christians, whose Sabbaths are spent in a kind of exhausting religious dissipation. From early in the morning till late at night, they are engaged in public services,—prayer-meetings, mission schools, hearing sermons, seeking out wonders; till tired nature sinks under the labor; and it seems a mockery to call the sacred day a day of *rest*. No time for sweet meditation, for examining our own hearts and their hidden motives, for baring the soul before the Omniscient eye, and praying, "Search me and try me, O God, and see if there is any wicked way in me!"

This is all wrong. We would do more *for* God in public, by being more *with* God in private. If the orator speaks with power in public it is because his mind has been disciplined and stored with knowledge in the solitude of his study. There it is that he gathers up those elements of power by which he is able to thrill the hearts and sway the minds of vast multitudes. A religion of public activity must be backed up by frequent seasons of meditation, heart searching, and prayer. In the days of Elijah the cause of truth and holiness was brought very low, the altars of religion were overturned, the preaching of God's servants was prohibited, and it seemed as if the emissaries of evil were about to triumph. The Prophet was a bold, daring man, not accustomed to cower before the frowns of wickedness; but he felt that he could do nothing in his own strength. He therefore retired to Mount Horeb for fasting and prayer, and for pouring out the complaint of his burdened spirit before the Lord; and there he heard that "still small voice" that filled him with a confidence before which systems of error tottered and fell.

But why refer to the example of others when we have that of the great Master. Jesus did not neglect public meetings. It was his custom to go to the house of the Lord. He was regular in his observance of the public means. His activity was such as to put our most active Christians to the blush; and yet he retired into remote places to spend whole nights in prayer. He commands us to enter our closet and shut the door, assuring us that the listening ear of God will be open to our every word. "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."

We have an inspired testimony borne to Isaac's faith. "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." His faith is seen in the fact that he goes on to dispose of the land of Canaan as if it were already in his possession. Everything outwardly looked unfavorable. As yet the only foothold which he had in that land was a grave; but God had promised, and there he rests. That promise was to his faith

the same as a performance. It was as certain to him now, when all was dark, as if he already saw his seed in full possession of their fair inheritance; and "sitting under their own vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid."

In reading the account of this act of faith on the part of Isaac, we should remember that the blessing of the patriarch was a prophetic act. It connected the son, upon whom it rested, with that illustrious line by which the Messiah was to come. This was the reason why Jacob's mother was so anxious to secure it to her favorite child; for the proud hope of every mother in Israel was, that through her this great Deliverer should come. It was God's sovereign purpose that Jacob, the younger son, should receive this blessing; and yet, that purpose was effected by the wickedness of others. Isaac did not intend to give the blessing where he did. By dissembling and playing the mean part of a pretender, Jacob secured it; and yet, through these unworthy means, God's holy designs were accomplished. This is a most wonderful and mysterious part of the ways of Providence. The God with whom we have to do is, in no sense, the author of sin. The very thought is blasphemy. He hates sin with a perfect hatred; and yet, his divine wisdom often overrules the sins of men for the good of his creatures, and the carrying out of his purposes of infinite love. "Out of evil still educing good." He makes the wrath of man to praise him.

When Job's heavy afflictions fell upon him he said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Now, in reading the narrative of his trials, we would be ready to infer that it was at Satan's hand he received them, and at the hand of the Chaldeans; but he recognized the Lord's hand, for without his permission they could have done nothing. In the very fact that the Lord did not prevent the evil from coming upon him, he knew there was some wise design. The sin connected with what the actors did was their own; the good brought out of it was God's.

In regard to our Lord's death we read: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." And yet, in

all the torture inflicted upon our Savior, we see the agency of Judas, of Pilate, of bloody-minded Jews who hated him without a cause. Still it was done according to the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Yet the actors, having done all that they did freely and by their own voluntary choice, are left without excuse. "By wicked hands ye crucified the Lord of glory." Their designs were wicked, their acts were wicked, their whole being was steeped in wickedness, and yet God overruled all for the highest good of the world.

How good it is to feel that the Lord reigns, and that he controls the affairs of the universe. He had the heart of Pharaoh in his hand as well as that of Moses, the heart of Saul as well as that of David. To his boasting, pompous enemy, our Lord said, "Thou couldst have no power unless it were given thee from above." This Providence controls alike the great and the small, the grain of sand as well as the mighty planet, the helpless infant as well as the vastest empire. Just as the law of gravitation controls the atom as well as the globe; so there is nothing too small or too great to be beyond God's notice and care.

It is worthy of remark, here, that when Isaac was told of the mistake which he had made in blessing Jacob, he does not undertake to correct it. He recognizes the mind and will of God at once. Said he, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Esau, in his bitter grief and disappointment, strove hard to get the matter reversed, but his father firmly adheres to what had been done. It is to this that the Apostle refers in Hebrews xii: 16, 17: "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Upon this some have founded a doctrine that is not to be found in the Bible. They have taught that the sinner may reach such a state of soul that he shall be found pleading with God in deep earnestness for pardon and salvation, and be turned away with a refusal.

Now, this is not the meaning, The repentance he could not find was on the part of his father, not on his part. He tried most earnestly to get the aged patriarch to change his mind, that is, to repent; but his cries and his tears were of no avail. The blessing had gone forth, and could not be reversed. No soul who truly repented was ever turned away by the God of love, nor ever will be. The sorrow of the world that worketh death—a mere remorse of conscience—may sometimes be thought to be repentance, but is not. This was the repentance of Judas, but instead of leading him nearer to God, it drove him farther off; for he went out and hanged himself. There have been some very improper and unguarded things said about persons, while yet living, having passed their day of grace. It may be so, but it is certainly not taught in the passage above quoted. In our intercourse with our fellow-men we should go upon the principle that while there is life there is hope. We should take it for granted, that the reason why God has prolonged life is to afford opportunity for repentance. Jesus is willing to receive the very chief of sinners. His blood cleanseth from all sin. His own glorious words are, "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

Esau is an example of warning to us all. He enjoyed great privileges. Born and brought up in a family where the true God was known and worshiped, with prayers offered up for him by believing parents, he yet voluntarily despised all these, formed an alliance with the heathen around him, and became a profane person. Alas! How many do the same now. Born in a land of Bibles, and churches, and Sabbath schools, and revivals of great power; with a mother's prayers uttered over their cradle, and a father's instruction, from their earliest years, poured into their ears; with the Holy Spirit striving with them from year to year, and pressing upon them the great powers of the world to come; they do as did Esau, sacrifice the interests of the future for a paltry, momentary, and sinful gratification in the present. They plead their temptations as an excuse, but the motives to yield to sin can never be so strong as the motives to resist it are. To sin may secure us a temporary

gratification, but robs us of an eternal weight of glory. To go with them in the ways of death, may please a few sinful associates, but it brings down on us the frown of God forever. Esau sold his birthright, not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for a fortune, not even for the breath of fame, empty and uncertain as that is, but for one morsel of meat! God says to sinners, "Ye have sold yourselves for a thing of nought." One sells his soul for money, another for pleasure of a mere animal kind, another for fame, and, in short, there is no end to the fool's bargains that are thus made. The devil is buying souls cheap in the market of sin, every day. "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" As an old writer says, "Worldly things are less than the soul and cannot fill it; they are worse than the soul and cannot satisfy it."

Esau felt his mean and sinful acts end in bitterness and sorrow. The beginning of a sinful life often looks quite flattering; but look at its end. "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of Christ?" As it is really the end that crowns the action, that is the way in which we should judge of things. The wages of sin is death. Sin is hell and hell is sin. As far as this world is concerned Esau was a prosperous man; but he had no riches of the soul; and the most dreadful of all kinds of poverty is that which strikes into the soul and pierces it through and through.

Some writers have enlarged, at considerable length, upon Isaac as a type of Christ, especially with reference to his being offered up in intention as a sacrifice. This has always appeared to me more fanciful than real. It was the shedding of blood that made the victims of sacrifice typical of Christ; and in this case no blood was shed. And even if his blood had been shed, it could not have been in the nature of an atonement; for one poor sinner could not atone for another. There are abundant types of our blessed Redeemer, clear and distinct, without calling up those which are only imaginary.

In reading the life of such men as Isaac, living a life of such constant faith and fellowship with God, amid their dark dispensation, how should it rebuke our low state of piety. We

live in the blaze of Gospel light. They had that same Gospel only in dim outline. In promises and prophecies they saw the Savior afar off. We see the complete, the perfect Christ. And yet how far we live below our privileges! Let us remember that the only way to use these is to profit by them. Such great blessings despised turn into avenging judgments. God removes the candlestick out of its place, and leaves the despiser of its light in darkness; a darkness that precedes the blackness of darkness forever. Gospel truth ruins if it does not save. The soul that hears God's voice calling from day to day, and does not obey, soon occupies that state of soul that the old writers used to call *gospel-hardened.* Listen to what the Word says: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

At last, the fretting cares and domestic sorrows that had darkened the latter days of Isaac are over; and gently as the babe goes to sleep upon its mother's bosom, he sleeps in death. His happy soul joined the parents in heaven, who had so rejoiced over his birth on earth. They now have him forever.

"Hast thou not glimpses in the twilight hour,
Of mountains where immortal morn prevails?
Comes there not through the silence to thine ear
A gentle rustling of the morning gale,
A murmur, wafted from that glorious shore,
Of streams that water banks forever fair,
And voices of the loved ones gone before,
More musical in that celestial air?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### JACOB. THE PREVAILER WITH GOD.

In the lives of the people of God, as recorded in the Bible, there are two points very manifest; God's treatment of them as a great moral Governor, and his treatment of them as a God of forgiving love. As a great moral Governor who cannot pass by sin, he drove the first transgressor out of Eden, out into a world cursed for his sake; but as a God of grace and love, he at the same time gave him a promise of a coming Savior. That stern expulsion, and that flaming sword which "turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life," spoke of God's unquenchable hatred of sin; that gracious promise spoke of his deep love to the sinner. The sinner is forgiven freely and fully; but the result of his sins in the cursed earth in the sweat of his brow, in his struggles with the "thorns and thistles," are still allowed to remain.

We see this subject illustrated in the case of Moses. He spake unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah, and God, as a moral Governor, was greatly displeased, and prohibited his entering the promised land. Moses was forgiven, but the prohibition which his sin caused was not withdrawn; he was still kept out of the promised land; but to show the love of his God he is taken up to Pisgah and permitted to view the fair Canaan from afar, and when he died the Lord tenderly buried him. We see the same thing in David's case. In the matter of Uriah the Hittite, he fell from a high and holy elevation. His open immorality in the sight of all Israel could not be passed over. He repented in broken-hearted contrition before God and he was freely forgiven; but the result of his sin goes on unchecked. His child dies. Absalom rises in revolt, and a long succession of domestic troubles darkens his

earthly lot, and wrings his heart with anguish. God's government and grace work together, the one not interfering with the other, but both proceeding from the same hand.

Perhaps this principle is nowhere so clearly illustrated as in the case of the patriarch Jacob. It shows itself throughout his entire history. Jacob was a chosen child of God, a subject of God's grace; but when he sins he comes under the chastisement of God's government. His deceiving his father and supplanting his brother in the matter of the birthright, was a mean, wicked act; and the righteous judge could not pass it over. Hence we see him a fugitive from his home, compelled to serve a hard master for twenty years, his wages capriciously changed again and again, never permitted again to see the face of that over-indulgent mother who had helped him to plan his wickedness; his ten sons agreeing to deceive him, as he had deceived his father; living for years in bitter sorrow on account of the supposed death of Joseph; in terror of being murdered by his injured brother, and driven out of his own land, among strangers, by a famine, there to die. Oh what a large harvest of sorrow from evil seed which it took him but a few minutes to sow! Yet Jacob was a good man, enjoying God's pardoning love; but this did not prevent him from being a subject of God's governmental chastisement. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap."

Some years ago I read an interesting article on this subject in a small religious magazine, called "Things New and Old," which contained a most forcible illustration, which I regret that I cannot give in the words of the author, but only from memory. Suppose a master sends a servant to sow a field with wheat. That servant, either from ignorance or gross carelessness, sows some vile weed. The master in the exercise of great goodness and forbearance pardons him freely and fully. The servant is deeply grieved for the wrong he has done his master, and sheds many a bitter tear over his fault. But would the master's pardon and the servant's repentance change the weeds into wheat? Certainly not. When the harvest time comes, and golden grain should be waving over the field, there

is nothing but the noxious weed. Now, when the servant looks over that field, ought the fact that the crop is not changed to make him doubt his master's forgiveness? Not at all. Just as the nature of the pardon did not alter the crop, so the nature of the crop does not alter the pardon. The two things are perfectly distinct.

Still farther; the master, in the exercise of great chemical skill, might extract a medicine from the weed that would be a thousand times more remunerative than the wheat would have been, and thus the sin of the servant might be overruled for good. But that would not make his wrong right, nor would it alter the great law that a man's reaping must be according to his sowing. This is plain and practical.

Jacob, having obtained the blessing from his father, is compelled to go forth from the land that he loved, and the home of his affections, to a strange land, of which he knew nothing. We can easily conceive the deep depression that must have rested upon his heart. Much that was pleasant he was leaving behind him, and before him all was dark and uncertain. A good man, going forth in the path of duty, could not help feeling a sadness pervade his mind, under such circumstances. But Jacob had been brought into these circumstances not by duty, but by sin. His exile from his home was the result of his own transgression of the law of right; and the knowledge of this rankling in his conscience, must have made his journey a melancholy one. To have a deep and abiding sense of God's favor in the soul, an approving God above us and an approving conscience within us, is the best support in times of trial. It makes the timid brave, and the desponding cheerful. It gives a new aspect to the whole face of nature, and fills the soul with music and sunshine.

At length the shadows of night gather around our traveler, while the fatigues of the way make rest welcome. He lies down to sleep under the open heavens, the grass his bed, and a stone his pillow. But that God who is pitiful and of tender compassion, saw all the sad desolation of his heart; and in a vision of the night comes to comfort him. In those early ages

of the world, before there was a written revelation, God often communicated with his servants in this way. Now that we have a complete revelation, it would be folly to depend upon dreams for our guidance. As an old writer says, "Read your dreams, if you like, in the light of Scripture; but do not read Scripture in the light of your dreams." We are now to be guided only by the sure Word of God.

In his dream the patriarch saw a "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." The meaning of this ladder, I think, is clear from the words of our Lord, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Christ's atonement connects heaven with earth; has opened up the communication between God and man, which sin had closed; and now sinners can get visits of mercy and promises of grace from the righteous Judge that they had offended. A man going up a ladder is above the earth and getting nearer heaven; so a man who receives Christ's atonement by faith gets above the vanities of earth, and dwells in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

When Jacob awoke from sleep he was much affected, and filled with solemnity. He felt that God had come very near to him. "Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not." A great fear, a solemn dread came over him, as he reflected upon what had taken place; and he exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Those whose ideas of worship are confined to ritualistic forms and priestly ceremonies, those who feel as if there can be no house of God except in consecrated piles of architectural splendor, may wonder why he called that humble spot a house of God. But God's presence can make the meeting on the hil-lsides, or in the caves of the earth, the assembly of the true worshipers in the forests or in a barn, the house of God; while the grand cathedral, if it contains nothing but dead forms, is repulsive in the sight of that Great Spirit, who must be worshiped in spirit and in

truth. This whole scene at Bethel is highly instructive, and is well improved in the following beautiful lines:

"Sweet spot! 't was surely hallowed ground,
Where heaven itself diffused around
The breath of peace and love;
There Jacob slept—there angels hung
O'er him from whom the Savior sprung,
To guard him from above.

"He slept—but who that saw him there,
Beneath the chill and midnight air,
Upon the dewy sod,
Lone as he seemed, could e'er have guess'd
How bright a glimpse of glory bless'd
That favored child of God!

"The gloomy cloud, by sorrow spread
Around the sleeper's dreamy head,
Had melted into light;
And, lo! a vision too intense
In splendor for weak mortal sense,
Blazed on his inward sight.

"A ladder of stupendous height
Led upward through the gates of light
On to the throne of God,
While to and fro, 'twixt heaven and earth,
Fair holy ones, of seraph birth,
In steps of glory trod.

"Some wafted Israel's fervent prayer
Along each heaven-ascending stair,
E'en to the ear of Love,
While myriads more, as swift as thought,
Full many a goodly blessing brought
In answer from above.

"Sweet dream! its memory oft would cheer
The patriarch's soul through many a year
Of sorrow, fear, and strife;
He loved it, for he there could see
A beauteous emblem, Lord, of Thee,
Thou glorious Way of Life!

"Through thee the Father's love descends,
Through thee our love to him ascends,
And prayer and praise arise;
While every promise, Lord, of thine,
What is it but a step divine
To lead us to the skies?"

Jacob, in token of his gratitude to God for this manifestation of His presence, took the stone that he had for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. This he did to commemorate what had so recently transpired, so that it might be permanently remembered by him. The great evil with us is, that we are apt to forget what God does for us, and to allow his gracious interferences of love to fade away from our minds. This forgetfulness is very guilty, and were God not so long-suffering, would have provoked him long ago to remove his goodness from us forever.

The patriarch also dedicated himself anew to God. His pouring oil upon the pillar was a symbol of this. His language is touchingly beautiful. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my Father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Here we see that there is not a single mercy that we get from God's loving hand, but lays us under obligation to devote ourselves anew to his holy service. As the Author of all our blessings he has a claim upon our all. Our time, our talents, our property, our all, should be held as sacredly devoted to Him who has done so much for us. In seasons of special deliverances, and when new and unexpected blessings have been conferred upon us, we should feel called upon to make a new consecration to the Lord. Let any Christian look back over the way that God has led him, patiently bearing with his wanderings, supporting him in afflictions, opening a path for him when all seemed shut up, bringing him to many a green spot for refreshment when weary of

the dusty highway of life, and causing unlooked for blessings to come down upon him like the dews of heaven; and lost must his soul be to all emotions of gratitude, if he does not exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits unto me?" And surely that *something* that he will render to the Lord, will be a gift that he will *feel*, that will require self-denial and self-sacrifice. Surely he will not be like the mean, rich man, who, when taken from the river, turned to the man that saved him from drowning, and offered him a dollar! Well, perhaps the poor wretch knew best the value of his own life.

Such an act is nothing to the meanness of the man who, professing to be saved by Christ from eternal death, stands up before God in the great congregation, and sings,—

> "Were all the realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small,
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my soul, my life, my all,"

and then drops into the Lord's treasury less than his cigars or some other useless luxury cost him for the last week. O how will such conduct look when the light of eternity shall reveal the value of souls, and the infinite importance of salvation!

We come now to consider one of the most wonderful events in the history of Jacob's eventful life. Fourteen years have passed away since he had the encouraging vision and received such cheering promises, and now he is about to return to the land he had left under the most painful circumstances. In a solemn review of those years, he says, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." When he uttered these words the blue hills of his native land were in sight, and he was near to all the familiar scenes of his youth, so affecting to the heart of an exile, when they again come into view. He had tested God's promise and it had not failed him; and now that he is again in trouble he knows where to go for help.

With his large family and abundance of flocks and property he is moving along, when he is informed that his brother Esau, whom he had so deeply wronged, is approaching, with four hundred men; and, he has reason to fear, with a murderous purpose. What does he do in these circumstances? God had told him to return to his native land, and had said, "I will surely do thee good," and therefore he knew that he was in the path of duty. And yet, he does not recklessly go forward, without using all the means in his power to avert the threatened danger. In him we see prudence and piety blending in beautiful union. He divides his company into separate bands, he sends forth a handsome present to his brother, accompanying it with a message calculated to allay resentful feelings in his bosom; and thus having done all that he could do, he betakes himself to God in prayer. He knew that our best laid plains will fail without a divine blessing upon them.

Jacob was alone with God. The company so dear to him are sent on before him. It is past the midnight hour. Great things are pending upon the results of the coming day. It was not merely that his own life was in danger, but Leah, and the beloved Rachel, for whom he had served fourteen years with hard toil, and also his children, dearer to him than his own life, were all exposed to the same common danger. He resolves to devote that night to pleading with God. He knew that he had the heart of Esau and that of his rude band in his hands, and he could turn them in kindness towards him, as he had already done that of his surly, selfish father-in-law. All that human aid and skill could do had been done; God must now be his refuge and his strength.

We see the patriarch kneeling upon the ground, his bosom heaving with emotions too big for utterance, the deep silence of night only broken by his voice of earnest entreaty; when, suddenly, strange hands seize and grapple him, and there wrestled a man with him to the breaking of day. How startled the man of God must have been! And yet this sudden and seemingly rude attack was the harbinger of safety, a token of an answer to his prayer. It was a true friend that came to him in the

darkness of that memorable night, though he came as a foe. Thus God often comes to us his people in a way that is most alarming; that for a time makes them fear that he has become their avenging enemy; but soon we find that the hand that shook us so vigorously has, after all, contained a most precious blessing for us. He wounds only to heal; he casts down only to exalt.

We are not to understand this as a vision, but as a real transaction. There was, no doubt, a bodily struggle; but still, the chief thing upon which our minds are to be fixed is, the spiritual conflict and victory. Hence it is, that deep anguish and agony of soul in pleading with Jehovah has been called "wrestling with God." This is something, however, that mere formalists and ritualists cannot understand. It is something quite different from kneeling on a velvet cushion, opening a beautifully bound prayer-book, and reading a prayer composed by some one a century before, with far less emotion than the last news by the Atlantic cable would be read. It is to plead till every power of the soul is on the stretch in intense longings after God, and big waves of emotion chase each other across the soul. So wrestled the adorable Savior on that dark night in Gethsemane, till the body sweat came from every pore. Thus did Paul wrestle when he had great heaviness of heart, for his brethren according to the flesh. Thus did Luther wrestle in certain great crises of the reformation work. Thus did Knox wrestle when in an agony he cried out, "Lord, give me Scotland or I die!" And thus it was that Jacob wrestled.

It is a legitimate subject of inquiry: Who was this person that wrestled with the patriarch? In the narrative he is called "a man," while Hosea speaks of him as "the angel," and Jacob himself says, "I have seen God face to face." He is also said to have had "power with God." To us, therefore, this mysterious stranger is a stranger no longer. It was the Lord Jesus; he who as "the angel of the Covenant," had often appeared in a bodily form, till the fullness of the time came, when he assumed our nature. Then "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." It was the same who had walked in Eden in the

cool of the day, and talked with the first pair; who conversed with Abraham, and showed himself amid the shadowy visions of the prophets, who now strove with Jacob. He might, therefore, have again said, "Surely, God was in this place and I knew it not."

Concerning this great Being the wonderful expression is used, "And when he saw that he prevailed against him." How strange! The High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, does not prevail against a poor and sinful child of earth! The reason was, that Jacob was, pleading the Lord's own promises, trusting his own pledged word, and *that* he never can deny. The worm Jacob prevails with God because he keeps pleading the promise, "I will surely do thee good." Still, that Jacob may not become proud and think that he had gained a great victory in his own strength, with one touch of the Divine finger his thigh is disjointed. Just as Paul, after the heavenly revelations had been made to him, had a thorn in the flesh left with him lest he should be exalted above measure.

But though the pleader is now disabled and in pain, he does not give up the contest. He now has a perfect understanding of who it is with whom he has been striving; and this only increases his ardor to obtain the blessing. The Divine visitor seems as if he would leave him, saying, "Let me go." Just as the same Holy One, many centuries after, in going with the disciples to Emmaus, seemed about to go further, and yet in answer to their constraining prayer tarried with them; so he was now only trying his servant's faith. He did not wish to leave him unblessed, in his weakness and despair. He is more willing to give than we to ask.

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." What boldness of faith, what earnestness of entreaty, what perseverance of prayer is here! Was the Lord offended with this familiarity of faith? Was the pleading sinner hurled to the ground a bleeding corpse? No, no. When we have a promise to plead he will listen. He loves to have us use the holy violence of faith. Jacob's determination not to be denyed, reminds us of the perseverance of the Canaanitish woman, when pleading with

the same Lord long after. Though first met with utter silence, and with repeated rebuffs, she kept up her plea, till the gracious answer came, "O, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." We lose much for want of this importunity. We become discouraged and disheartened when the answer to our prayer does not come at once, and turn away in unbelief. An old writer says, "If the arrow of prayer is to enter heaven, we must draw it from a soul full bent." By the parables of the unjust Judge, and the friend that comes in the night to borrow the three loaves, our Lord teaches us, in the most emphatic form, the value of importunity in prayer. Let us lay this to heart.

It is worthy of remark, that Jacob does not specify minutely what he wanted, but only asks a blessing. He knew that the Lord was well aware of his present circumstances, and that if he gives him a blessing at all, it will be sure to be one that will meet all his present necessities. He left it to the Divine Wisdom to choose the best form in which this could be done. And God did bless him, then and there. Faith obtained a glorious victory. As one says, "He was knighted on the field." His old name, Jacob, which signified a supplanter, and therefore was calculated to remind him of his sin, is removed; and a new name, Israel, meaning a prince with God, is given unto him. The reason of this new name is, that he had "power with men, and had prevailed." The fact that he had prevailed with God, was a pledge that he would prevail with his brother. He was not now afraid to go forward, for if God be for us who can be against us?

What a bright, glorious morning was that which now dawned upon Jacob. The shadows of night that now gathered around him on the previous evening, were but a faint emblem of the darkness of his mind; the brightness of the sun that that morning illuminated the face of nature, was but a faint sign of the heavenly light that filled the soul of the man of God. What though he now went along lame and halting in body, his soul was strong in God. The warrior does not care that he carries from the field some wounds, when the shout of victory is in his ears.

Let us learn from this whole subject, the great value of secret prayer. Jacob had a great deliverance from a public danger that threatened him; but it was in secret, in the darkness of the night, that he obtained the answer to his prayer. The result of that night's pleading with God appeared openly afterwards, no doubt to the astonishment of those who did not know the secret, fervent prayer that had brought about that result. On this subject Dr. Hamilton beautifully remarks, "When Jacob and Esau met—on the one side the shaggy chieftain with his four hundred swordsmen, and on the other side the limping shepherd with his caravan of children and cattle—a flock of sheep approaching a band of wolves; when the patriarch took his staff in his hand and stepped forward to meet the embattled company, and the anxious retinue awaited the issue—they saw the sword drop from Esau's hand—they saw his brawny arms around Jacob's neck—they saw in the red savage a sudden and unlooked for brother. They saw the result, but they had not seen the prelude which led to it. They had not been with Jacob at the ford of Jabbok the night before. They had not viewed his agony and heard his prayer; and though they noticed the halting limb, they did not know the victory whose token it was. They saw the patriarch, the husband, and the father; but they knew not that he was a prince with God, and and had gained Esau's heart from him who has all hearts in his hand. The halting thigh and the pacified foe were obvious; but the wrestling over night was unknown."

How sweetly Charles Wesley gives poetic expression to this whole scene, in one of the finest hymns in our language:

"Come, O thou Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see;
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with thee:
With thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

"I need not tell thee who I am;
My sin and misery declare;
Thyself hast call'd me by my name;

Look on thy hands, and read it there:
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.

"In vain thou strugglest to get free;
I never will unloose my hold:
Art thou the Man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold:
Wrestling, I will not let thee go,
Till I thy name, thy nature know.
* * * * * * *

"Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak;
Be conquer'd by my instant prayer:
Speak, or thou never hence shall move,
And tell me if thy name be Love.

"'Tis Love! 'tis Love! thou diedst for me;
I hear thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure, universal Love thou art:
To me, to all, thy bowels move,—
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

"My prayer hath power with God; the grace
Unspeakable I now receive;
Through faith I see thee face to face;
I see thee face to face, and live!
In vain I have not wept and strove;
Thy nature and thy name is Love.

"I know thee, Savior, who thou art,—
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend:
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end:
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy nature and thy name is Love."

It might seem to us, after such a marvelous display of God's goodness, and such abundant proofs that he was fully forgiven, that Jacob's trials are now at an end. But alas! there still clings to God's people so much of the remains of sin, such a tendency to find their home on earth, that it becomes neces-

sary that they should often feel the sharp strokes of the rod of affliction. The troubles that thicken around the pathway of the patriarch, are a proof that the rod is held by the hand of love. It was the same God that pardoned his sins, that gave him the assurance of his love, that folded him in the covenant of eternal blessings, that permitted those distressing afflictions to come upon him. We cannot here dwell upon them. His sons treacherous and blood-thirsty; his only daughter defiled; his life in danger from his neighbors, his favorite son supposed to be killed and long mourned as lost to him; the famine bringing him and his to the verge of starvation; all these trials bringing from his soul the bitter cry, "All these things are against me;" presents a solemn picture of the way in which the God of love often finds it necessary to lead his own people.

There are two scenes in the closing up of Jacob's life in which he appears to great advantage; namely, his introduction to Pharaoh, and his dying address to his sons. It was in the eternal counsels of God, that Jacob should go down to Egypt; but what striking providences and strange agencies are employed to bring about the result! Order, at last, was brought out of confusion, and the sweetest harmony out of the harshest discord.

The patriarch stands before the monarch with simple dignity. The plain shepherd stands before the most powerful prince then upon the face of the earth, but there is nothing rude in his manners on the one hand, nor servile and sycophantic on the other. "And Jacob blessed Pharaoh." By imploring the blessing of God upon this heathen king and upon his empire, he is leading his mind to think of that great Jehovah, and in a way, too, that could not give offence. And how impressive his reply when he is asked his age, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." He knew that he was standing on the verge of eternity; and this is his solemn review of his life. It was only a pilgrimage, he had possessed no certain dwelling-place; but God had prepared for him a city, and by the eye of faith he could already see its open gates.

Though his might be called a long life, yet he speaks of his days as *few*. They seem so when we look back upon them. And *evil* also. Ah! this is the worst of it all. Days of suffering, because they are days of sin; these two things inseparably united together. How humbling in reviewing our lives, not to be able to think of one day without sin—all evil; not one in which we have served God perfectly. And how should this lead us to value the precious blood of Jesus, that cleanseth from all sin.

The last hour of the man of God has come. He fears it not, but, like a weary child, he longs to go to his rest. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." God is very near to his dying servant, and imparts to him the spirit of inspiration, the spirit of prophecy, in which to address his sons as they gather around his bed. "Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father." A most solemn sight was here. The dying address of a parent is always so, under almost any circumstances; but when the words of that parent are inspired words, and are also prophetic of the future, his voice becomes the voice of God himself.

The addresses to his several sons are most solemn and impressive. That to Reuben is uncommonly so. He is reminded of a foul, unnatural crime which he had committed forty years before, and the peculiar weakness of his character, that of instability, faithfully pointed out. His next two sons had been united in an act of monstrous cruelty and deception, mingled with horrid impiety; and the righteous indignation of the parent flames out against their sin. Nowhere does sin look so exceeding sinful as when we are on the confines of glory, with all its sinless beauty about to break upon our view. It was an hour of deep tenderness, when he was about to part from those he loved, but no parental emotions must be permitted to interfere with faithfulness to their souls.

At length the last son is spoken to, the last words they shall ever hear from a father's lips have fallen upon their ears. His breath shortens, he contracts his withered limbs, the animation

that so lately flashed in his eyes dies out, and the heart that had throbbed under so many sorrows is at last at rest. And while Joseph casts himself upon the cold clay, weeping out the bitterness of his anguish, the happy soul is with that God who had met with him at Bethel. He is no longer at the gate of heaven, but in its glorious courts, to go no more out forever.

"There is a day of sunny rest
For every dark and troubled night;
And grief may bide an evening guest,
But joy shall come with early light."

## CHAPTER VII.

### JOSEPH. AN EXAMPLE TO YOUNG MEN.

The story of Joseph is one that charms and interests all classes of readers. The young are delighted by the succession of dramatic scenes through which he passes; while the more thoughtful reader sees the wonder-working hand of God's Providence, bringing from small beginnings the most stupendous results. His life, as presented on the page of inspiration, is one of beautiful symmetry; uniting attention to the duties of earth and to the claims of eternity; diligent in business and yet fervent in spirit; making the most of both worlds by giving up his whole being to the guidance of that religion which is profitable for the life that now is, and for that which is to come.

Joseph is brought before us in the fresh glow of his boyhood's days, when he dwelt with his fond father in the land of Canaan. As he was the child of his father's old age, and as his mother, of loved and cherished memory, was dead, we do not wonder when told that he was much petted and indulged by Jacob, who showed to him a foolish partiality in the presence of the rest of his children. This showed itself in various ways, especially in providing for him showy and expensive clothing, calculated to excite the envy of his brothers. This conduct was wrong on the part of the father, for it not only exposed his son to the hatred of his brethren, but was well calculated to puff him up with vanity. Alas! how many young men are ruined by the unreasonable and hurtful indulgence of their parents. Those parents wish to be their best friends, but in reality prove their worst enemies; indulgence in idleness, extravagance, and unrestrained passion, crush out every bud of fair promise, till parent and child together fall under the crash of some sad moral delinquency. We can find some apology for Jacob's

JOSEPH'S DREAM.

conduct in the fact that he was now far advanced in years, and that Joseph was the son of his beloved Rachel; and we cannot but admire the grace of God in preserving the youth from those heart sins to which his father's injudicious conduct exposed him.

Just at this time Joseph had two dreams, which seemed to predict his future preëminence over the rest of the family. In the innocence of his heart he related these dreams in the hearing of his brethren, and at once their envy was turned into hatred and brooding revenge. An opportunity soon offers for this hatred to vent itself in acts of deadly cruelty. His brethren have been some time at a distance from home, feeding their flocks, and Joseph is sent by his father to visit them and bring back word of their welfare. In the spirit of prompt obedience that marked his whole career, he set out on his journey, and after some time spent in search, at last found them at Dothan. At the sight of him all the malignity and rancor that had long been accumulating in their hearts became roused into activity The first proposal is to murder him on the spot; but they are led to abandon this by the intervention of Reuben, and proceed to cast him into a pit in the wilderness. But the thought of leaving him to perish there of hunger seems to have touched the heart of Judah, and through his intercession they came to the conclusion to sell him as a slave to a company of Midianitish merchants that were passing at this time. Before parting with him, however, they strip him of his coat, and after dipping it in the blood of a kid, present it to his father as an evidence that his son has been killed by some fierce beast. The story was believed, and the old man in the bitterness of his anguish says, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning!"

But it is not my design to minutely relate the story of Joseph, which is familiar to every Sabbath school child; but rather to notice how his faith in God enabled this young man to act, in the world of strangers, among whom he was so rudely thrown, and at such a tender age.

And first, it is very evident that Joseph was animated by religious motives and feelings. His pious father had shown his

affection for him in better ways than dressing and ornamenting his body. He had sought to lead him to God, and to have his soul clothed in those holy principles which are the noblest adornment. Often had he told him the story of grace, unfolded to the first guilty pair, and repeated in many a covenant promise to his fathers since. And the principle of faith had taken up its abode in his mind, and bore fruits unto holiness, as it always does, casting a splendor of goodness over all his subsequent life.

This was manifested in the spirit in which he bore his injuries. For one so tenderly brought up and so fondly indulged, to become all at once the victim of such vile treatment, from those that he had never injured, and from whom he had a right only to expect kindness; would, in the case of most persons have produced a dark, sullen spirit of utter distrust in all human kind; a sour, misanthropic mood of mind; that would suspect a foe in every man that approached them, and a hypocrite in every one showing them kindness. With many the injuries he received would have produced revenge, gathering around them the fierce passions of perdition itself. But nothing of this kind is seen in Joseph. He does not even sink down into a low, despondent state of mind, as some weak characters would have done; but proceeds with cheerful energy to fulfill the duties belonging to his position of life into which the Providence of God had introduced him. And how ready he was to forgive the injuries inflicted upon him! He did not say, with some, "I might forgive some things; but crimes so great, so unnatural, so unprovoked, I can never forgive, consistent with my own self-respect." This is only giving a fine name to the spirit of the devil. He did not even make use of that miserable, sneaking expression, "I may forgive, but I can never forget." No, in after years, when he met his brethren in Egypt, he met them with a generous, whole hearted forgiveness; and did all that he could to lead them to forget their fratricidal conduct toward him. It is true that he adopted a course of conduct toward them that was intended, and which had the effect, of bringing them to repentance for their past crimes; but this was for their good,

and his seeming severity was as trying to his own generous, loving heart, as it was to them.

At last we see Joseph in a new home, but one very different from that from which he had been so rudely torn. There he was a free, happy youth, living in the sunshine of a father's smiles; now he is a slave. There he had pious instruction and holy example; now he is in a family of dark heathenism, and where his virtue is to be put to the severest test. It is always a critical time in a young man's life when he leaves home influences, and enters upon new scenes, far from paternal restraints. But if he has the love of God in his heart, if he makes a conscience of carrying his religion into every thing he does, it will protect him from the corruptions of earth, and the temptations of hell. Greater is He that is for him than all that can be against him; and he will be brought off more than a conqueror.

So we are told that the Lord was with Joseph in his new home. He was in the path of duty, suffering wrong, but not doing wrong; and so he felt a comfortable assurance of the Divine favor. As Andrew Fuller says, "What a difference is there between the cases of Joseph and Jonah! They were both in trouble, both absent from God's people, both among the heathen; but the sufferings of the one were for righteousness' sake, while those of the other were of his own procuring.

It is worthy of notice that Joseph brings prosperity into his new home. "His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." This shows that this young servant of God had not kept his religion concealed—that he had not been ashamed of it. He had not, to avoid persecution, joined in the idolatry of Egypt; but openly worshiped the true God of heaven and earth. This display of principle, of true manly piety, gives his master such confidence in him, that he promotes him to be steward over all his affairs. God not only blesses his own children, but makes them a blessing. Just as Laban had been prospered for Jacob's sake, so Joseph became a great blessing to Potiphar, and afterwards to the whole land of Egypt.

Joseph is now in comfortable circumstances. A tide of suc-

cess flows in upon him; every thing that he did prospered, and a brilliant prospect spread out before him. No doubt, he often thought of the vale of Hebron, and the loving father that he had left there; but in the land of strangers, his father's God had been with him, and he felt happy.

But life is a mixed state. Joys and sorrows, smiles and tears, sunshine and clouds, are strangely mingled together. In the day of our brightest prosperity we may prepare for a day of adversity. A dungeon is awaiting Joseph. Fiery trials are appointed him. His faith in God is yet to be more severely tried. The wife of his master is a profligate woman, one of those who urged him into "the way to hell." We know something of the low state of morality among these Pagan nations, sunk in gross darkness; and as this woman was ignorant of the true God, an idolater, a worshiper of animals and loathsome insects, we do not wonder at her degradation. But we tremble for the young man. Will he remember God? Will his religion sustain him in this fiery trial? There are few forms of temptation more dangerous to young men than that of sensuality; and none, if yielded to, that will prove so ruinous to soul and body, for time and eternity. Joseph stands, as it were, upon the brink of a fearful peril, and the welfare of his whole future is suspended upon the decision of a moment.

His situation reminds us of what occurred near Niagara Falls, some years ago. A steamboat started from Buffalo with some hundreds of persons on board, for the Falls. The nearest point that it was safe for the boat to approach the great cataract was Chippewa Creek, about ten miles above it, on the Canada side. The excursionists spent a happy day in visiting the scenes around the Falls, and toward night got on board the boat to return to their homes. By some mismanagement on the part of the engineer, a sufficient quantity of steam had not been generated, and when the boat passed out of the creek, and encountered the rapid current of the river, instead of going forward she began slowly to drift back toward the awful cataract.

All was now wild consternation on board. The roar of the Falls could be heard in the distance, and the remorseless river

was drawing them on to their doom. At length a happy thought entered the mind of the engineer. He took the oil that was on board for lubricating the machinery, and threw it into the furnace. The flames blazed up with intense heat; more steam was speedily the result, and then came a struggle between the boat and the sweep of the mighty river. The result is watched with almost breathless anxiety by the hundreds whose lives depend upon the issue; but soon they see by objects upon the shore that the boat is moving upwards, and when in a short time she strikes calmer waters and the point of danger is passed, a shout of joy ascends from every heart. An old, gray haired man lifted his hat and said, "The Lord has delivered us. Let us pray." And the multitude kneeled down upon the deck, while the voice of their thanksgiving went up to God along with the voice of the mighty Falls.

To a worse danger than this was Joseph exposed; and when we see the calm look that he casts to heaven for help; and instead of the fires of unholy passion burning in his eye, we see there a fixed resolve to do right, we rejoice in deepest sympathy with that right; and when he gives utterance to the noble sentiment, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" we cannot doubt that a youth so well begun will be crowned with a useful and honored close.

Here we see the value and importance of an early religious training. Divine truth impressed upon the mind from the earliest dawnings of intelligence, accompanied with believing prayer, cannot fail. God's word of command and of promise on this point is, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The child is not only to be taught but to be *trained*. There is often a great deal of teaching where there is no training at all. The owner of the vineyard does not let the vine run any where it likes; but with a wise and skillful hand he trains it. It must grow up in the direction he wishes.

The following touching tribute of a young minister on the occasion of his ordination, to the efficacy of a mother's training, is worth quoting here: "I have no miracle to publish; I have

no surprising or sudden change to relate; but blessed be His name, I was brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The taking of my little hand in hers—I think I feel it still—and leading me aside to pray; her concern on returning from the house of God, to enable me to remember and understand the sermon; the murmur of her dear voice at her devotion as I passed her chamber door; the maxims and principles she lodged in my infant mind; the tears that bedewed her reproofs; the caresses that enforced her entreaties; her cheerfulness that constantly said, 'O taste and see that the Lord is good;' her example, that embodied her religion, and made it as lovely as herself; these endear the memory of a mother from whom, under God, I have derived my spiritual as well as my natural life."

Joseph thought of God's all seeing eye when under temptation. This showed that his religion was a practical reality. A man may hold, as a matter of mere speculative belief, that God sees all that he does; but if he can take liberties under the inspection of God, which he would not take under the eyes of his fellow men, he is little better than an atheist. Extending to all the thoughts of our minds, penetrating to all the secrets of our hearts, to the motives of our actions, to the working of our affections, to the whole frame-work of our lives, should be the great truth, "Thou God seest me."

Suppose that there was one spot somewhere in the universe where God could not look, could not see all that is going on; would you, my reader, like to live in such a place? If one country could be discovered where we were as invisible to God as He is to us, would you like to emigrate to that land? If a place could be found out where God took no notice of men's actions, where Bibles and Sabbaths are unknown, would you be found flocking along with the multitude that longed to reach that God-forsaken spot? These questions, if pressed upon the conscience, will prove a real test of character to us. There are many who would be in their element in such a place, for as far as they can succeed in forgetting God, they are trying to turn the world into such a place.

To good men the thought of such a world or place is repulsive. It might be rich in all that is attractive and gratifying to the senses; but to live under the solemn, loving eye of God is a pleasure to the good man. To feel that his work and his worship are alike under the inspection of his heavenly Father, is to him a delight. He does not look upon the Holy One as a spy upon his actions, looking upon all he does for the purpose of finding fault; but rather as a loving friend who is watching for his good. He would not, for all worlds, have it otherwise than it is. He feels himself under the loving eye of One to whom we can ever come in the confidence of faith, who knows all his wants better than he could express them, and who never, for one second of time, loses sight of him or his affairs. If there was one instant of our lives when God did not see us, we might fear for our security. We might fear that then the enemy would come in upon us like a flood, and that we should one day perish by the hand of our ever malignant foe. But there is no such vacancy, where God is not. He is ever near. The whole universe is full of his presence. The very smallest or meanest object upon which we can look speaks of constant superintendence.

Young man, make God your friend by faith in Jesus, and you will love to think that God is near you, seeing you and thinking of you. When temptation comes upon you like a roaring flood, the thought that His eye is upon you will be like an anchor to your soul. It will hold you in safety as it held Joseph. You will learn to do all as in his sight, but for his glory. You will do all that you can do heartily, as to the Lord. And then, in the great day of Judgment he will own our work that we have done for the humblest of his people, as done for himself. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." A gentleman, after hearing a sermon on this text, said: "A few days since I carried to a poor christian woman a comforter, warm but well worn, and two loaves of bread, good bread, but a little stale. The weather was very cold, and the comforter was gratefully received. The poor woman was hungry, and the bread was

better than she usually obtained. But while listening to the sermon to-day, I thought that I had reflected that it was JESUS I was visiting in the person of one of his disciples, I would have taken a new comforter and fresh bread."

There is one point of great importance in the history of Joseph, and from the consideration of which we may derive much instruction, his refusal to do wrong, and his firm adherence to the right, brought him in the first place into great trouble. It led to the loss of his situation, of his reputation, and of his liberty. This is one of the trials of our probation, that goodness is not always rewarded with happiness and prosperity at once. This is one of the severe trials of faith in every age, that vice seems for a time to flourish and walk upon the heights of prosperity, while virtue is trampled in the dust. Potiphar's wife, living in pomp and great worldly grandeur, and regarded by her friends as a very model of virtuous propriety; and Joseph living in prison under a degrading charge, is a case in point. If doing right always led to immediate and direct prosperity, there would be little room for the exercise of faith. People, in that case, would be under strong temptation to follow the right, as some followed the Savior when upon earth, for the loaves and the fishes. But doing right often leads, in the first place, to the loss of a man's property, to the loss of his good name, and it may be to the loss of his life. It often leads to the prison, to the instruments of torture, and to the scaffold. It must, therefore, be chosen for its own sake by those who would persevere in well doing to the end.

It is true, that in the end, the religious man makes the most of both worlds; that his religion proves profitable both for time and eternity; and that even amid the worst trials and persecutions to which his principles may expose him, he has an inward peace, a heavenly calm in the consciousness of right, that makes him rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer in a righteous cause. The truth may call upon us to make sacrifices in her interests, but she abundantly makes up for all such losses. The germ of eternal life is deposited in the believer's heart, when he first receives the truth, and it goes on expand-

ing into the blessed fruit of eternal glory. In seeking the kingdom of heaven first, they secure all other things that they can possibly require. Listen to the words of the blessed Redeemer, "And no man has left houses, lands, wife, children, family, for my sake, who shall not receive in this life an hundred fold." Yes; heaven's bank pays a hundred per cent. The man who lives under the approving smile of God is rich, though living in outward poverty; and happy, though the object of the world's bitter rage. God is his and he has all in Him.

Joseph's religion kept his temper sweet, and his sympathy with humanity warm and strong, notwithstanding all his trials. There are many who when they suffer from the cruelty and the malignity of their fellow creatures, become soured and crabbed in their disposition; lose all confidence in humanity, suspecting a villain, either open or concealed, in every man they meet. They sink down into a dark misanthropic spirit, till hateful and hating, they are shunned by all. Not so with Joseph. He had been grievously injured by others, even by those that he had every reason to trust. Yet his sympathies are as ardent and his heart as warm toward his fellow men, as if he had met with no disappointment. No sooner does he enter his prison than, instead of sitting down, sullen and sulky, in a corner of his cell, he begins to make himself useful to others. He enters into the troubles of his fellow-prisoners. He becomes cheerfully the servant of servants. God was preparing him for a situation of great responsibility, honor, and usefulness; and he took kindly to the necessary lessons. He learned to bear the yoke in his youth. He learned to govern by first learning to obey. He stooped in order to be lifted up—he humbled himself in order to be exalted.

Joseph is exalted to great wealth and honor and power in the land of Egypt. His elevation is sudden as it is great. How does he bear it? It is difficult to carry a full and flowing cup. It is hard to stand upon a great height without giddiness. The tempest passes over the modest flower that reposes in the valley, but sweeps down the lofty tree that lifts its head

high upon the mountain's brow. Many a man who in poverty and obscurity gave great promise of usefulness on earth and of glory in heaven, has been dragged down to hell by golden weights, under the curse of both God and man. Nearly all are willing to try the experiment, to try the test; only a few elect spirits of the race come out of it triumphant. Joseph was one of these. He shows the same lofty regard to God's will when he stands next to the throne, as when he occupied a prisoner's cell. The same heart, fearing God and loving righteousness, that beat under the slave's fetters, throbbed under the gold chain, the emblem of royal authority. The same reverence for the great God reigned in his soul when he rolled along in the chariot of State, as when he was dragged along, the poor, sorrowing captain of the Midianites.

In short, Joseph carried his religion with him wherever he went, and in whatever situation he occupied. And this is the nature of all true religion. It has an all-pervading power. Some one has aptly said, "The grace of God is not an aromatic perfume, to be put into a glass bottle, corked, stopped, and laid aside for special occasions; but it is that which should overflow, and give tone, and fragrance, and ornament to all that man is." There is no need of a man going out of the world in order to be a christian; but rather let him carry his religion, with its sanctifying influence, into all he does, and thinks, and says. Let him discharge well the duties belonging to the situation where God has placed him; yet keeping his heart fixed upon heavenly things. Soon the things of the world that now captivate and ensnare unstable souls, shall have passed away like a dream; and then blessed shall be those souls whose hopes rest upon the unchanging Savior alone.

Another thing in Joseph's character worthy of our admiration and imitation, is his deep filial reverence. His affection to his father is manifested in the most unequivocal ways, on every occasion. The first question which he asks his brethren is, "Doth my father yet live?" and then with what eagerness does he charge his brethren, saying, "Haste you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath

made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not." And when he first meets his father how affecting the scene! With tears streaming from his eyes, he hangs upon his father's neck, and the many trials of his life and home-sickness of his heart, are all forgotten in that long and loving embrace. He seems as if he could not do enough for his parent's comfort. He watches over his declining years with a love tender as a mother's; and when at last he dies, the affectionate son "fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him." No trouble is spared to show respect to the remains, and love to the memory of the departed one. The whole picture is most beautiful.

How beautiful in children is reverence and respect for their parents. A young man was leaving home to enter upon the stern duties and dangerous encounters of life, when with tears in his eyes, he said, "Now then, mother, I am all ready. I am very sad, though I am ashamed to say it. How I shall miss you and all in the dear old home! Do write often. I am ashamed of my weakness."

"Love for your mother and your home is no weakness, my boy;" was her reply. "If you left home without regret, I should think that I had been a bad mother to you. Do not forget your mother's God. He will always be near you—a present help—a powerful friend." A kind embrace, a last kiss, and John was gone to battle with the world. But the memory of that mother's prayers, and the deep love and reverence he had for her was a protection in many an hour of trial and temptation.

I have no wish to be unduly fault-finding, but I fear that truth compels the assertion, that want of respect for parents is peculiarly the sin of our age and country. Young people do not now, I fear, show that reverence for parents and that respect for old age that marked a by-gone period. Many of them, at least, are so very wise in their own conceit, that the counsels of wisdom and experience are set down very promptly as the drivelings of old-fogyism. To despise paternal authority they think a sign of wisdom. I am now addressing young

men, some living at home, and some far from the parental roof. I ask their special attention to a few words on this important subject.

I hold up to you Joseph as an example of what a young man should be to his parents. How tender, considerate, obedient and kind he was the whole inspired narrative shows. I can assure you that few subjects are more practically important to you than this. There are many homes in our land that might be happy, but have a dark shadow of wretchedness thrown over them by the disobedience of sons. Many a father has a withering blight thrown over his old age, and his gray hairs brought down with sorrow to the grave; and many a loving mother is bowed down in broken-hearted anguish, on account of the rude, cruel, and undutiful conduct of those who might have made their last days their best days. Ah! God will not hold such guiltless. His awful curse is upon them now, and will chase them into eternity, if they repent not. Even upon earth the righteous Judge often visits this sin with his most terrible judgments.

What base ingratitude marks the sin of disobedience to parents! In the helpless days of infancy they watched over you. In sickness they spent long, sleepless nights attending you, and their tears fell in showers over your couch when dangerous symptoms appeared. For you they toiled and planned and thought and exercised self-denial, long before you were conscious of all this love Through your whole life these true hearts have beat responsive to your welfare; and even now would they lay down their lives for you. And yet, it may be at this moment, you are treating them with cruel neglect or with insolent scorn! It is a wonder of forbearance, that a thunderbolt has not leaped from the hand of the Almighty to smite you for such ingratitude. And were society not in such a corrupt state, you would be shunned as a deadly plague, and treated as a monster of depravity.

Remember that these parents will not long be with you. Infirmities are gathering thick and fast around them. A few more years, and they will be laid away to sleep in the silent

grave. You should use them well and love them well while you have them. If not, your conscience may wake up its sleeping thunders over their graves, and make your soul tremble under its blasting rebukes. Remembering the past when it is too late, remorse may prey upon your soul with a vulture's appetite. The most appalling sight I ever saw was the wild despair and bitter remorse of a wicked, disobedient son over the grave of his mother. "O, if I had her back for only one hour, that on my knees I might ask her forgiveness!" he cried, as with clenched fists he smote his breast in his agony. It reminded one of the despair of the lost.

As a general rule people die as they live. "Tell me," said one to a minister, "how he died?" "There is a more important question than that," was the reply; "that is, how he lived." Joseph lived a life of faith, and he died in faith. "By faith Joseph, when he died made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones." That is, he had strong faith in God's promises that his people would be brought up out of that land to the fair Canaan that had been promised them. His last words were, "I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." God had done great things for him in Egypt. There he had been raised up to great splendor and greatness; but all that could not make him forget his loved Canaan. There was his home, and there went his heart's dearest affections. So it is with the Christian now. God may here give him many comforts and blessings. A comfortable home, kind friends, positions of honor and usefulness, and many things that make this life happy; but still he knows that this is not his home, not his rest. He often makes mention of Canaan, of his glorious home above, and longs to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

"He gave commandment concerning his bones." The soul is the chief part of the man, but we cannot be indifferent to the body that has been the soul's dwelling-place for so long a time. Joseph's heart had not rested in Egypt, nor did he wish

his dust to rest there. That the body, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and yet, in its glorified state, to be the eternal companion of the soul, should be to us an object of some solicitude, is in accordance with both nature and revelation. Some affect an utter indifference as to what may be done with their bodies when they die. But if God cares for his people's dead bodies, watches over them, and has promised to give them a glorious resurrection, surely it would be the silliest of affectations for them to profess indifference to the whole subject.

How blessed the close of a holy, useful life. Joseph's life had been one of great vicissitude, but with triumph he entered upon the rest that remains for the people of God. O, who can tell the bliss of that moment, when he entered upon his eternal reward; and received it as the reward purchased for him by Christ's blood! There, with the choice spirits of the universe, with angels that never sinned, and above all, with Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, he is now enjoying unspeakable bliss.

"Calm are the holy dead
When the passion of life is o'er,
When the green turf flowers o'er the resting head,
And the turbulent dreams of the world have fled,
And the wild heart throbs no more!

"Bless'd are the holy dead,
Though dark were their lot before;
For heal'd are the wounds that on earth have bled,
And dried are the tears that on earth were shed
For the sorrows that they bore!"

"Wise are the noble dead—
Ay, wise with a noble lore,
For to their clear glances are open spread
The scrolls where the secrets of God are read,
In the heaven where angels soar!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MOSES. THE MAN OF GOD.

Moses was one of the greatest men intellectually that ever the great God made. And yet so great are his moral qualities, and so much are our minds filled with the contemplation of them, that we scarcely ever think of his intellectual greatness at all. And yet in every light in which we can view him, where can we find his equal? As a writer, as a poet, as a legislator, as a military leader, and as a philosopher, he towers up above all other men, as Mount Blanc rises in surpassing grandeur above the common mountains of the world.

But it is upon his moral greatness that the Bible chiefly fixes our attention, because these are something that we can imitate. We cannot be like him in the overshadowing grandeur of his intellect, but in his faith, in his love, in his nearness to God, in his sweet communion with Jehovah, in hours and days of solitude, we can be as he was. He was a man of like passions with ourselves, and all that God's mighty grace did for him it can do for us. We have the same God to go to, the same blood of atonement to bring us near, the same throne of grace to approach, and the same mighty motives of love to urge us on to the surrender of our whole being to God's service. Nay, we live under a brighter dispensation, under a clearer light than he enjoyed; and our love to God should be greater, and our song of gratitude more abundant than was his.

It has been common when speaking of Moses to speak of his meekness as being the most prominent feature of his character. But the inspired writer speaks of his faith. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." This is always done in the Bible. The Centurion

for whom our Lord did so much, showed great love and great humility; but Jesus did not speak of these, but of his faith. "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." The reason is that that grace is the root of all the others. Hope may soar heavenward; peace may fill the soul with a holy calm; zeal may burn with divine ardor; holiness may persevere in the face of every discouragement; but faith must give life to them all. Hence the prominence that is given to it. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Faith enabled Moses to look upon the things that are unseen but eternal. It led him to leave Pharaoh's proud and splendid palace, because sin was there; and fixed his gaze upon an infinitely more glorious home in heaven. It led him to turn away from the society of earth's great ones, to the company of those who, though now poor and despised, were yet to wear crowns and sit upon thrones forever. It led him to give up seeming good, that flatters to destroy, for real good that is eternal, and that far exceeds the highest expectations.

The faith of Moses led him to make great sacrifices for the right. This faith always does. And yet those sacrifices are not felt to be so great by those who make them, as they seem to the men of the world. The reason is, that instead of being regarded as privations, they bring true happiness. Had Moses despised the light that was within him, he would have been the most miserable of men. Sin is the most dreadful evil in the universe. A man may be very poor and yet be happy. He may be covered with the most loathsome disease; he may be the object of the bitterest persecutions; he may be immured in dark and fetid dungeons; he may be led out to a cruel death, around which unspeakable horrors cluster; and yet be the most happy of men. But sin lodged and indulged in the heart, will kindle the fires of hell there. External pleasure may for a moment divert attention from his inward agony; but that long lasting anguish called *remorse*, will go where the soul goes, and live where the soul lives, unless forever blotted out by the blood of Christ. The sinner's hell begins here, and when he dies he goes to hell as the only place he is fit for in the whole universe.

MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

He is not lost because God wished it, for he did not. He is not driven to perdition by any fixed, arbitrary decree of Jehovah, but he goes there because he has chosen to fill his soul with the elements of hell. As a stone cast into a lake sinks to the bottom by its own weight, so sinks the Christless sinner, after death, into the blackness of darkness.

In like manner when sin is forgiven, when the soul walks under the beamings of God's favor, its heaven is already begun. It has a little heaven to go to heaven in. Hence to Moses the reproach of Christ was greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. He believed what God said, and did what God bid; and cared nothing for the world's reproaches. He trod the earth as God's freeman. He could look into the eternal future without a cloud on his brow. He had Christ's love in his heart, and to the dignity of the true man that adds the glory of the saint. He had afterwards many rough places to tread, but they were smoothed by the luster of a coming glory. His happiness was not like an earthly flower, that fades almost before we have time to admire it, but rather like the tree of life, rejoicing in perpetual bloom. Men would speak as if Moses had made great sacrifices, but it would not seem so to him. As the stars are lost to our view when the greater light of the sun travels up in the heavens; so all Egypt's wealth and glory would seem worthless beside the riches of Christ. That splendid palace in which he lived would seem a paltry thing compared with the house not made with hands. He had an eye to the recompense of reward.

Reader, was not this a glorious beginning in life, for a young man that had just come of age? Follow his example. We do not ask you to give up the pleasures of sin, without offering you any equivalent. Your Savior's loving voice comes down from the heavens in waves of heavenly music, inviting you to peace and rest here; and in the home above he will teach you to sing in noble strains the song of Moses and the Lamb.

In looking over the history of Moses one thing strikes us above all others, and that is the familiarity with the great God. Amid the wild and grand majesty of mountain solitudes he

talked and reasoned with Jehovah as a man with his friend. This was because his religion had a right beginning: it began in faith, which gives peace with God. "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace with him." He could come with great boldness before his Lord, because he came through the blood of atonement. When a soldier is put upon guard the officer gives him the countersign, and he is told to let no one pass who cannot give that word. Now, if you wanted to get access to the commanding general, you must be able to give that word. You might be well dressed, and friends might come forward and testify as to the respectability of your character, but that would avail you nothing. You cannot pass until you have given the right word.

So is it with the sinner, when he would gain access to God and heaven. One may come and tell of his good works, but that is not the countersign. Another may tell of his prayers, and of his religious emotions, but that is not the countersign. Another may tell of how much he has given for building churches, and for the support of ministers and missions, but neither is that the countersign. What then is it? It is the precious blood of Christ. Hark! It is God's own voice that says it. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin."

If you could collect all the jewels of all the crowns of the world, their value would be immense. If you could empty the gold and silver mines of the world, your treasure would be very great; but the whole of them put together could not buy five minutes of time. Some sinner, dying in despair, cried out, "A world of wealth for an inch of time." But, alas! no such bargain could be made. The blood of Jesus, however, obtains for us eternal life—an eternity of glory. It pays the mighty debt that we owed to the justice of God. It bids us go free from the curse of the law.

We are told that a wealthy gentleman, but a short time ago, went to preach in a town in England, but failed to obtain a congregation to hear him. Determined, however, to be heard, he next day caused large placards to be posted over the town,

stating that whosoever would come to his house on the following Monday, between the hours of ten and twelve, would have all their debts paid. This notice was ridiculed by nearly all who read it. Some supposed it a hoax, others regarded it as the statement of a madman; in short, all united in disbelieving the statement. At length, when ten o'clock came, they persuaded a foolish old man to go and try the truth of the advertisement. He knocked at the door, was requested to come in, when the following conversation ensued: "What do you want?" said the gentleman. "To have my debts paid, according to your advertisement," was the reply. "How much do you owe?" Five pounds," was the reply. "Will that cover all?" said the gentleman. "Yes, that is all I will need," was the answer. "Well, give me a receipt, and here is a check on the bank for the money." The old man was astonished, but thanked his benefactor and was about to leave, but was told that he could not leave till after twelve o'clock. Soon after, another ventured in, led by idle curiosity, and had his debts paid in the same way. Another followed, and he likewise had his debts all paid. As soon as twelve o'clock had arrived they were permitted to depart, and on going out to the crowd who had assembled around the house, showed the checks that they had obtained for the money, and assured them that there was no deception about the gentleman's proposal. Upon hearing that, they made a rush upon the house, hoping to have all their debts paid. But they were told that it was now after twelve, that his promise was only to those who should come between ten and twelve; that had they come then they should all have been treated alike, but that now it was, for them, too late!

Alas! thus it will be with many gospel hearers. God's proclamation is, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!" And again, "Whosoever believeth on Him shall have eternal life." But they doubt, they hesitate, they delay, till the hour of their probation has gone past, till the door is shut in their faces, and the wail of their bitter anguish is heard outside as they cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!"

Moses is now a child of God. He has confident trust in every word that his Lord says. Young, vigorous, well educated, full of manly strength, his soul overflowing with love to God and to his countrymen, he seems to us ready to enter upon his life's work. That work was to be the greatest ever alotted to any mere man. His countrymen are suffering under the grinding oppression of a relentless tyrant. In the soul of this young servant of the Lord, there burned a spirit of true patriotism! And many a visit of compassion he paid to his brethren, to cheer their unhappy condition with the hope of coming deliverance. The case was urgent. A great work was to be done, and in our wisdom we would expect that, without an hour's delay, he would be called to enter upon it.

But God's ways are not as our ways. Moses is not yet fit for his work, nor are the people fit for deliverance. It is true he has been educated in the schools of Egypt, and has obtained many brilliant accomplishments in the palace of Pharaoh; but he must pass through the stern discipline of God's school of providence, before he can be fit for his mighty mission—his high vocation. Before he can govern he must first learn to obey. Hence, for forty long years, he is sent into the solitude and obscurity of humble life; that he may learn to gain the victory over his own passions, before he gains a victory over Pharaoh; that he may learn entire and implicit submission of himself to God's will, before he carries the knowledge of that will to a great people. We, in our hurry to accomplish great results, would have dispensed with that forty years' training, amid the mountain solitudes of Midian; but God in his wisdom sends him who was to be the future law-giver, the deliverer of three millions of people from slavery, to wander as a humble shepherd over another man's flocks, in those retired valleys. There, with the wild mountains all around him, whose rocky peaks seemed to pierce the blue vault of heaven, alone with God, his pride and self-will were purged away, and he came forth from the process mild in spirit, patient in temper, reverent and humble; and one of the meekest of men in his intercourse with the world.

As these years rolled on and found the servant of God still in his humble position, it might seem to one of less faith than he, as if God had forgotten him; as if his vast powers were to be lost to the cause of truth and righteousness. What solemn and stupendous thoughts must have passed through his mind as he walked among the sublime works of God, and thought of all his dealings with his people in the ages past, and of the promises left them of future good. No doubt his fervent prayers were often heard echoing amid the mountain caverns by day and by night. No doubt his faith pleaded the promises given to his fathers, and refused to let God go till they were gloriously fulfilled.

Nor were his faith and prayers in vain. They never are. God has not forgotten him, nor his oppressed people. He was but waiting for the needful preparation in them both, to bless and honor them as no people were ever blessed and honored before. True, he had caused them to pass through severe trials, bitter afflictions; but it is the glory of the God of grace to bring forth the sweet out of the bitter, light out of darkness, and heavenly order out of earthly confusion. The circumstances which led Moses to flee from Egypt at the very time when he seemed ready to begin his work, and which detained him so long in Midian, were all appointed by infinite wisdom. Nor was the time spent there at all lost. It was in that solitude that he is supposed to have written, under divine inspiration, the book of Genesis, and also the book of Job. Here, too, God gave him a wife and children to cheer the hours of his solitude with the sweet sympathies of domestic endearment.

But the time for action has at last come. God's set time to favor Zion has at last arrived. Pharaoh has died and gone to his solemn account; but deliverance does not come in that way. Another king succeeds him who, if possible, hates the Israelites with a deeper hatred, and shows it in acts still more cruel. Deliverance comes in a way that casts contempt on human pride and glory. It does not come in the shape of vast armies with fluttering banners and glittering armor, led on by

brave and skillful generals; nor does it come by the oppressed people themselves rising in their might, resolved to have liberty or death, bursting their ignoble chains and trampling their oppressors under their feet. No, this is the way that human sagacity and policy would have arranged the matter. But vastly different was God's plan. He sends the deliverer forth in the form of a humble shepherd, with simply a rod in his hand; but that rod is the emblem of God's omnipotence.

But before Moses goes forth he receives his high commission —his ordination to his great work—in a way so awfully solemn as to send a trembling through his whole being. One morning he began his daily duties as usnal. There was nothing to indicate that the day would be different from any other, or that anything would occur to break the monotony of his every day life. So true is it that we know not what a day may bring forth. That was to be a marked day in his history, and in the history of the world. A day that was to break up his solitude and bring him forth into a prominence and an activity to which few men are called; and roll upon him a responsibility under which an angel might stagger.

While engaged in his accustomed duties, a most wonderful sight caught his eye. It was that of a bush on fire, trunk, branches and leaves, all burning with the greatest fury, and yet not consumed. He draws near to examine this wonderful phenomenon, when his whole soul is thrilled by a voice addressing him from out of the flame. It is the voice of God himself. It is he who, under the appellation of Angel of the Covenant, had appeared to his fathers. The same that spoke with Abraham, wrestled with Jacob, and showed himself in distinct vision to the prophets. It was the same Being who, in the fullness of time, took upon him our nature, and died upon the cross for us. The first feeling of the man of God was that of terror. This is natural to our fallen humanity when we feel ourselves in the presence of Jehovah, and arises from the fact that we are sinners. We know that we have merited his displeasure, and when we feel that he is near us we are ready to conclude that it must be to punish. Ah! if the

felt presence of God made even a man like Moses tremble, how awful must that presence be to his enemies in the great day of his wrath.

Moses is warned against approaching his great Creator with undue familiarity. We are permitted to come boldly into his presence, through the blood of Jesus, but not with the boldness of presumption, nor that of irreverence. We have heard some address God as they would not address their equals, nay, even their inferiors. We have seen some behave themselves in the house of God, as they would not dare to do in the house of a passing acquaintance. Such should remember that God's eye is upon them, and that he will not be mocked. He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his people; and wherever his presence is clearly realized the soul in profoundest awe be made to cry out, "How dreadful is this place!"

We have seen that the first feeling of the leader of Israel was that of fear, but that soon gave place to confidence and trust. His faith gave him the spirit of adoption; and soon we find him talking and even reasoning with the God of the whole earth. He still invites us to come near through the blood of atonement, saying, "Come and let us reason together." He is the most reasonable being in the whole universe. If we have a good reason to urge he will give it full weight; and we will not be afraid that any wrong or injustice will be done us.

Moses displayed great modesty and self-diffidence when told of the work to which he was called. No doubt this was a very lovely and proper trait of character. "Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think." It was well enough that he should tell the Lord of his unworthiness, of his feeling of unfitness for such an high position, and ask for divine aid. But when the Lord said, "Certainly I will be with thee," and condescended to give him a token by which he might know that this was the case; then any more shrinking back and complaining of his unfitness, was the result of unbelief not of faith.

So is it with many now under the brighter gospel dispensation. Jesus has died in their stead, and made a perfect satisfaction to the broken law for all their guilt. By faith in Him we are told that not only are they justified from all things, but that they are complete in Him; that in him they have all things pertaining to life and godliness, even eternal life. And yet, they keep dwelling upon their own sinfulness and their unworthiness, till all the comfort which God intends them to receive from the good news is destroyed. When urged to join the church, they tell us that they are not worthy. When thinking of coming to the Lord's Supper, they shrink back because they are not worthy. Just as if Christ had done nothing, and as if the whole work of their salvation was left to depend upon their own worthiness. Must it not be very dishonoring to the Savior to have his work thus treated as if it were nothing; and as if the Father were not well pleased with it, but had entirely disowned it? Whenever you hear people speak in this way, you may know that they have but a very imperfect knowledge of the gospel of our salvation. If we had been worthy there would have been no need at all of the blessed Jesus leaving the glory of heaven. There would have been no need of the bloody and tragic scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. To make our salvation, whole or in part, or the performance of any duty, to depend upon our feeling worthy, is to dignify unbelief with the name of humility.

This great sight which Moses beheld, the bush burning and yet not consumed, has been regarded by judicious divines as a striking emblem of God's suffering church. It may be so regarded from its lowly appearance. It was not in some lofty cedar, nor yet in the sturdy and majestic oak, that God appeared, but on a thorny bush. So the true church of God has ever been a lowly and contemptible object in the eyes of the wicked world. When she has appeared in pomp, and wealth, and fashion, and made herself popular with the world, it has been when she had become corrupted and degraded, an object over which angels might weep. In the days of Moses the church was poor and persecuted in Egypt. During our Lord's

THE MIRACULOUS FIRE.

days on earth the church was composed chiefly of poor fishermen, tax-gatherers, publicans, and the common people who heard the Great Teacher gladly. In the days of the Apostles not many great, or rich, or noble, were called. The same has been true all the way down through the ages to the present day. Those churches now that aim at the greatest popularity have the least. A pure church in the world must be a despised and persecuted one, for it is still true, that if any man will live Godly in Christ Jesus he will suffer persecution. Christ did not intend that the power of his religion should consist in outward grandeur, such as attracts the common eye; hence he instituted no pompous ceremonies, no gorgeous displays, but his worship was to be the modest and unpretending out-comings of a renewed heart

The bush burning with fire is a fit emblem of the suffering condition of the church in all ages The people of God have been an afflicted people Their pathway has been hard and rough, marked with their tears, and often with their blood. But this has been turned to our spiritual profit; for though the fire was severe it was also purifying Their trials preserved them from the dross of the world, made them a separate and peculiar people. the chaff only was consumed, not the wheat. The dispensation under which we live is that of the cross, hence as one of suffering The church is to follow her great Head, and He was made perfect through suffering. His dying legacy to his people, was peace, His own peace, but he accompanied it with the assurance that in the world they should have tribulation.

But the burning bush also told of the preservation of the church, the bush was not consumed The church has always prospered and increased in the fire; so that it became a proverb, that "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." She has flashed out her brightest glories upon the world through the flames of martyrdom. The reason is, that she is founded upon the rock of God's immutability. She does not draw her life and strength from the genius, the fortitude, or the self-sacrifice of her friends; no, it is up at the Divine

Throne that she gets her strength for every trial. She takes her stand upon her Lord's unchangeableness which makes her vital with immortality. We see the church in every condition of trouble and trial, in looking over the history of the past we see her in the ark moving majestically through a world of waters, with Jehovah for her pilot; and resting securely at last on Mount Ararat. We see her in those weeping hosts by the rivers of Babylon, whose harps, indeed, are silent only that they may listen to the cheering voice of Israel's God. In the pillar of cloud and in the pillar of light we see her sheltered by God's own hand from the malignant hate of her enemies. In this protection Daniel rejoiced in the lion's den; and the three Hebrews prove its sufficiency in the fiery furnace. And were all the uncounted multitudes of Christ's confessors to speak together at this hour, their voices would roll forth like the sound of many waters, saying, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against us."

Another respect in which the burning bush was an emblem of the church was, God's presence in its midst. It is of the church that it is said, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." The dying Wesley said, "The best of all is, God is with us." No wonder that the people of the Lord have been happy in dungeons, rejoiced on scaffolds, and shouted out their dying triumphs from the midst of the flames that consumed them. They had the living God for their companion. He still walks in the midst of the golden candle-sticks; and blesses with his presence the two or three assembled in his name. Thus Divine comfort is imparted to the sorrowful, the weak renew their strength, the timid are made bold, and the whole army of the Lord, animated by the presence of the Captain of their salvation, go forth with invincible might, conquering and to conquer. Yes, if we have the presence and good will of Him who dwelt in the bush, we need fear no evil; for "Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord."

On the other hand, what calamity so great as to be forsaken of God; infinitely better to lose friends, health, property, and life itself, than to be forsaken of Him. As Pharaoh and his

host went down like lead in the mighty waters, as the Canaanitish kings were destroyed without mercy; as Amalek was swept out of existence; as Belshazzar perished with his blasphemies on his lips; as Herod was eaten up of worms; so shall perish the Godforsaken every-where. As heaps of chaff before the whirlwind, as stubble before the devouring flame, so shall all those be who set themselves against the Lord and his anointed.

"Before the throne of God above
I have a strong, a perfect plea;
A great High Priest, whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

"My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart;
I know that, while in heaven He stands,
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

"When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

"Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

"Behold Him there! the bleeding Lamb!
My perfect, spotless Righteousness,
The great unchangeable 'I am,'
The King of glory and of grace.

"One with Himself, I cannot die;
My soul is purchased by his blood;
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God."

## CHAPTER IX.

### MOSES. THE MAN OF GOD. [CONTINUED.]

It is not my intention, nor the design of this book, to write the full history of Moses; but only to refer to those events that particularly brought out and displayed his great faith in God. We therefore pass by his many interviews with Pharaoh and the wonderful miracles by which he proved the divinity of his mission. The proud tyrant had cried, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" and had got such an answer to that question as God alone can give. The morning has at last dawned that is to witness the emancipation of the chosen people from bondage. With his vast charge and weighty responsibility upon his mind, Moses is calm and serene. He knows that God is with him. We see that vast host of men, women and children, go forth winding by the skirts of the great wilderness till they come to a place called Pihahiroth, on the shore of the Red Sea. As far as human eye could see it was the most dangerous situation that could be chosen for so vast an army. On each side of them towered up gloomy and impassable mountains; in front of them rolled the dark waves of the sea; while behind them came thundering on the old tyrant with his men of war, his horses and chariots.

We can scarcely conceive of a more trying situation than that in which Moses is now placed; for added to the outward dangers we have spoken of, a murmuring and seditious spirit had sprung up among the people. They ungratefully forgot all that had been done for them, and said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" One comfort he had, and that is, that it was God himself who, by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, had lead them into that situation. We may come

into difficulty while walking in the path of duty and guided by the providence of God; but in that case we need fear no evil. A storm may arise and threaten us with disaster, as in the case of the Disciples; but the Lord will be seen coming through the storm, bringing aid and comfort, and ultimate deliverance.

How nobly the faith of the man of God stood the test on this occasion! With a calm courage, and an unwavering intrepidity, he meets the hour of trial. Above the murmuring of the people, above the moaning and surging of the waves of the sea, his voice rings out the inspiring words, "Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show you to-day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever."

In this emergency the prophet betook himself to prayer. We are not told that it was public prayer, that is, that he gathered the people together. Neither are we told that he retired by himself for secret prayer. His public duties did not allow him time for that; and yet that he was praying we learn from the words of the Lord. "Why criest thou unto me?" It was what we call ejaculatory prayer; that is, while he was busy outwardly going among the people, he was, in his heart, busy with God. This is a kind of prayer that we can put forth anywhere. In the crowded railroad car, in the steamboat, in the bustle of the city streets, in the work-shop, or in the counting-room, amid the talk of our fellow-men, we can be talking with Jehovah.

But while there is a time for prayer, there is also a time for action, and that time had now come. The Lord said, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward." Here was another trial of faith. To go forward was seemingly to go into the sea. To obey seemed like going to destruction. But the man of God does not hesitate for a moment. Marshaling the people into proper order, we see him leading them down the sloping beach till the waves kiss his feet. There is a pause—a moment of suspense among the vast throng. The man of God lifts the rod, and the waters rolling back, stand like a protecting wall on either side; and on, through the spacious

pathway which Divine power had made for them, the heaven-protected people take their triumphant way. Soon they stand in safety on the opposite shore, sending up their glad song of deliverance to the God of their salvation. How poetical and grand is the Psalmist's description of this event. "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled."

When wicked men are doomed to destruction, they are left to be controlled by a dreadful infatuation. This was the case with Pharaoh and his generals. Mad with rage and blood-thirsty hate, they came rushing on, and plunged into the opening of the waters. Wild confusion, a fearful panic, takes hold of them. They would gladly retreat, but it is too late. With a crash, as if the foundations of the earth were giving away, the piled up waters come together and bury the proud hosts under those waves that roll and curl as if nothing had happened.

We spoke of Moses as being a great poet. If any one doubts this, let him read the song of deliverance which he prepared on this occasion. We find it in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, and it rises and swells into such inspiring strains, that we seem to be listening to the shouts of a victorious host, mingled with the crash of martial music, and the dashing of the waves of the sea. We seem to see the mighty arm of God lifting up that proud army and casting it into the depths of the sea, as easy as the man of might could plunge a stone there. How sublime when he speaks of the breath of the Lord as piling up the waters; and then as drying up the channels, that the redeemed of the Lord might go through. With what graphic power does he describe the rage, the fury, and the haughty boasting of the tyrant, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." His words thrill us like the blast of a trumpet, when he says, "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." No person of taste can read this sublime composition, whatever may be his views on the subject of the divine inspiration of the Bible without pleasure.

After the many proofs of the power and goodness of God which this people had experienced, we might suppose that they would never doubt or murmur again. But that man knows but little of his own heart, and little of human nature in general, who would indulge such a hope. Soon as their provisions became exhausted and starvation threatened them with its gaunt visage, they again began to pour out their vile and ungrateful reproaches against their leader. "Would to God that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Alas! may we not see in this a dark picture of our own hearts! All that Divine love has done for us in the past is forgotten, the very first trial into which we are brought. As if the God of the past was not the God of the present also, we send out our atheistic cry, as if we felt ourselves in a fatherless world. Instead of sending thunder-bolts to destroy this people, the Holy One of Israel, in great mercy, rains down upon them bread from heaven. When they looked out from their tents one morning they were struck with wonder to see something lying upon the ground like hoar frost, white and beautiful, and about the size of a coriander seed. It lay all around the camp, and on tasting it, was found to be sweet as honey. They cried out, "*Man-hue*," which signifies, "What is this?"

This manna our Lord tells us was an emblem of himself; for he says, "I am the bread of life that cometh down from heaven." The manna was not a work or composition of man at all. No human agent could proudly say, "this is my invention; I have brought deliverance to this people." No, it came direct from heaven. So it is with the plan of salvation; it is purely of Divine origin. All the sages of the world would never have thought of it; all the angels in heaven could never have devised it. The appearance of this manna was not very attractive, it was small and insignificant. So when our Lord came it was like "a root out of a dry ground." He made

himself of no reputation; He came in the form of a servant, meek and lowly in spirit.

This manna was given to the people freely. This murmuring people had no claims; no demand upon God for it. It was not to be bought; but was the gift of free grace. All were at liberty to gather it who complied with the terms. So is it with salvation. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. We can put in no claim but that of our entirely undone condition.

The manna was given in rich abundance. There was no need of any one perishing of hunger; if he did the fault was entirely his own. So the gospel feast is abundant; there is enough for the whole family of Adam. It is not like our heavenly Father to give a general call to the whole world, while he only makes provision for a portion of it. No, Christ "tasted death for every man."

This bread from heaven never failed the people of Israel, as long as they remained in the wilderness. And so long as the believer remains in the wilderness of the world, Christ will never fail him. We shall still have his arm to lean upon. Still have his presence to comfort us, and even through the dark and gloomy valley of death, his unfailing support shall not be wanting.

As the manna was to be gathered daily, so we are to live daily on Christ. The experience of last week or of last year, will not suffice for to-day. Let this thought rebuke those whose hope is centered upon an experience that lies in the dead past. Ask such persons if they are rejoicing in a present knowledge of sin forgiven, in a present acceptance with God through the blood of atonement, and you are referred to joys felt and hopes cherished many years ago. Ah! my friend, this will not do. It is Christ in you now the hope of glory. More needful than your daily bread is a daily faith in Jesus.

This manna was to be gathered early in the morning. So is it highly desirable that all should come to Christ in the morning of life. "They that seek me early shall find me." The salvation of the soul neglected till old age is almost a certain

THE DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH AND HIS HOST.

seal of damnation. The heart gets hardened, the habits of sin become strong as a chain of destiny to bind hoary sinners, and trembling under the palsy of a spiritual death the soul sinks into the dark prison-house of despair. But oh, how blessed the sou lthat has early chosen Christ! Its pathway is brighter and brighter to the perfect day; that day of eternal glory, that shall be followed by no evening gloom. The glow of young affection, the sweet simplicity of early confidence, the warmth and fervor of youthful love, and the full vigor and strength of the days of health, all given to Jesus, is a sight over which angels rejoice, and in which the Lord of angels sees of the travel of his soul and is satisfied.

At last the children of Israel have reached Rephidim; and here a new trial of the faith of Moses awaits him. There is no water for the vast multitudes, and hence death stares them in the face. Cast your eyes over that vast arid plain, and mark the scene of misery that meets your sight. All vegetation withers and dies under the burning heat. Children with parched throats cry to their mothers for water, but there is none to give them. Not a drop of the cooling beverage can be found to moisten even the lips of the dying; and strong men go about with bloodshot eyes, and a feeling as if an internal fire was consuming them. The cry of distress from the infuriated animals mingles with the cry of the camp; and the concentrated wrath of the perishing people falls upon the head of Moses. Fierce and terrible must have been their invectives, for he camplains to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me." The Lord commands him to ascend the mountain, and strike with his rod a certain rock from which a stream of water should flow. How unlikely was this to the eye of sense. Water from a rock, and that by merely striking it with a rod, would seem a very unlikely thing. If a strong company of sappers and miners had been sent forth with spades and crowbars, the people might have said, "Ah! they will soon find the water for us." But the work was done in such a way as to show that God's was all the glory.

And now we see Moses in the sight of all the people, approach that old gray rock, on whose wrinkled brow the angry tempests of a thousand years had beat in vain. All is hushed expectation in the camp. Life and death depend upon the issue of the trial that is to be made. The face of the man of God is calm and untroubled. With him is no doubt—no fear. For God to promise, is for him to believe. He lifts the rod—once, twice, three times he strikes the rock; and forth leaps the gushing waters, flashing in the rays of the sun. Down rolls the life-giving stream, and forth come the rejoicing thousands to drink freely. Mothers are seen running with all the energies of love to carry water to their children, while others hasten to supply the sick and the dying. How foolish would the man be who, almost dying of thirst, would refuse to drink until he first ascertained that he had been ordained, from all eternity, to drink of those waters. There, with parched mouth and bloodshot eyes, he sits down by the rushing stream, and says, "If I am ordained to drink of these waters, I will drink of them, but if not, it is no use for me to try." You would say to such a man, "Why, my friend, these waters were intended for all who thirst; you are among the number who do so, therefore at once drink and live.

But here is another who refuses to drink because he says he is not yet worthy enough. He must wait till he is a much better man than he is now. To him you would say, "These waters were not given because any of the people were worthy, but are the free gift of God's goodness. Therefore drink and live.

Those waters would not only be used to quench thirst, but to cleanse and purify, also. Soon as the people had quenched their thirst, and felt new life invigorate their frame, they would also wash and be clean. But suppose you were to see a man dying of thirst, yet refusing to touch one drop of the water, because he tells you he is not clean enough to do so; how great would you think his folly. You would tell him that this water is the only cleansing element he can obtain; and would urge him first to drink, and then with the new life thus

obtained to wash and be clean. So is it with the blood of Jesus; it not only saves us from eternal death, but cleanseth us from the love of sin. The whole human race are at this momen divided into two classes; those who have been saved and cleansed by that blood, and those who have not. To one or other of those classes you now belong. The application of the blood of Jesus makes a difference between men as great as between heaven and hell. Jesus, however, must be taken as a complete Savior. He came not to help you to save yourself, but must have the whole glory of the work. That work is perfect; to it you can add nothing; and oh, do not insult him by trying to do so!

Before the life-giving water could come from that rock, it had to be first smitten. This was done by divine command. It would not have sufficed to wave the rod over the rock, nor to lay it down upon it gently; the very thing must be done that God commanded, or not one drop of water could come forth. So our adorable Redeemer was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. The sword of justice must strike Him, because He stood in the place of sinners. Hence we are told that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin. Hence, also, in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, we have these words: "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The Lord took our place that we might take his place. Our sin was put upon Him, that His righteousness might be put upon us. Oh, amazing grace! Oh, boundless love! Dear reader, will you not look to that Savior this moment, and be saved?

"There is LIFE for a LOOK at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the Tree.

"Oh! why was He there as the bearer of sin,
If on Jesus *thy* sins were not laid?
Oh! why from his side flowed the sin-cleansing blood,
If his dying *thy* debt has not paid?

"It is not thy tears of repentance, or prayers,
But THE BLOOD that atones for the soul;
On Him, then, who shed it, thou mayest at once
Thy weight of iniquities roll.

"His anguish of soul on the cross hast thou seen,
His cry of distress hast thou heard?
Then, why, if the terror of wrath He endured,
Should pardon to thee be deferr'd?

"We are healed by His stripes;—wouldst thou add to the word?
And He is our righteousness made;
The best robe of heaven he bids thee put on;
Oh! could'st thou be better arrayed?

We have thus seen how the faith of Moses again triumphed. In reading some account of the labors of the Rev. John Eliot among the Indians, we were struck with these words: "I have not been dry, night or day, from the third day of the week unto the sixth, but so traveled; and at night pull off my boots and wring my stockings, and on with them again, and so continue, but *God steps in and helps!*" Yes; it may well be said that, "the hour of our extremity is the hour of His opportunity." When all human help steps out and leaves us, He steps in Ah! How pleasant to hear the sound of his footsteps approaching, but still more glorious to have His very presence with us. To resign what we have been trying to do with trembling hands and failing strength; and to see Him take it up, with the certainty of success, is happiness indeed. The very memory of such gracious interference on their behalf, will fill the mouths of the people of God with songs of gratitude forever.

But no sooner is one trial over with the man of God, than another comes. They tread upon each others' heels. Like the waves of the ocean they come in quick succession. While the Israelites were yet in a weakened condition, the Amalekites came, in a most cowardly and treacherous manner, and attacked the camp. Moses at once sent forth Joshua, with a band of brave warriors, to repel the foe. There was, in sight of the battle field, a hill, to the top of which Moses ascended,

Aaron and Hur being his attendants. There the man of God engaged in prayer for the success of the army of Israel. It was noticed that while he held his hands up toward heaven, Israel prevailed, but when, through fatigue, they drooped, then Amalek prevailed. Hence, Aaron and Hur, one on each side, held up the hands of the servant of the Lord, till their enemies were driven from the field.

Moses was a man who lived very near God; but he was no fanatic. He unites prayer and exertion together, as they ever ought to be. He is on the mount pleading and wrestling with God, while Joshua was below with his brave followers, with invincible courage doing battle for the right. As this was the first battle that Israel had fought, no doubt their patriotic leader felt peculiarly anxious for a complete victory. It would inspire the people with fresh courage to meet the difficulties that lay before them in the future; and increase their confidence in the ultimate success of the undertaking.

What a mighty power is prayer when it springs forth from a believing heart! Then it is that we see the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availing much. The man who has the true spirit of prayer is happy above all others. God may not always give him what he asks, for that would not always be for his good. Indeed, we often ask for that which, if given, would bring upon us destruction. But his prayer will be answered in this, that the spirit of holy resignation will be imparted to him. When our will is lost in God's we are truly happy. A sweet repose, a holy calm comes over the soul; which is a foretaste of the rest that remains for the people of God.

How happy was Moses to have such noble co-workers as Aaron and Hur! And happy is that minister of the gospel who has those around him who hold up his hands by faith and prayer. Easy is it to preach and labor under such circumstances. The enemies of the Lord are then driven back, the cause of truth advances gloriously, and the song of victory breaks forth from the heart that was sinking under a load of despondency.

When Moses was pleading for Israel his hands began to hang down. Human weakness will show itself in the strongest; for, as Mathew Henry says, "The best of men are but men at the best." But we have a great Intercessor in the heavens, who never grows weary, whose hands never hang down, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. When conscious of guilt, the thought of His intercession brings true comfort to the believer. The new nature within him makes him loathe and hate sin. On feeling its workings in his heart, he can say with Job, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." In such a state of mind the words of the apostle come like a breeze from paradise: "If any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father."

In reading this case of successful intercession on the part of Moses, we cannot help joining it with another case, that occurred some time later. We have an account of it in the thirty-third chapter of Exodus. It is when he went to plead forgiveness for the great sin of making and worshiping the golden calf. It is a passage in the history of this good man, so richly edifying that it should be read again and again, and reflected upon with deepest reverence. It is something like a rich mine of gold, the more it is wrought the richer the supply. In the conversation with God which is here recorded, we cannot help noticing the simple-heartedness of the Prophet. He fully unbosomed himself, and pours out his whole heart. He has now had some experience of what kind of a people he has to deal with, and of the difficulties with which he will have to contend; and he feels that to have power with the people, he must first have power with God.

The Lord acknowledges the full power of his plea. He condescends to talk with this poor feeble mortal face to face. He listens to his appeals for help, not only with patience, but even with approval. He does not chide him for his boldness; but, on the contrary, acknowledges the full force of every word he says. Moses felt bowed down under a sense of his own unfitness for the work before him; and pleads for God to go with him, with an intensity of earnestness, that almost makes us

tremble as we read of it. We almost feel as if he were going too far. But the reply comes, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." We would think that here the prophet would stop. But no; his mind is in so anxious a state, the issues involved are so tremendous, that he comes nearer and still more urgently presses his request, when the reply again comes, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."

Emboldened by this success Moses ventures still further. Indeed, he had been drawing nearer and nearer through the whole of the interview. A holy familiarity had been going on, till it reaches a climax that overwhelms us with astonishment. The man of God now takes such a position as no mortal man ever took before, as he exclaims, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Oh, what a request to come from a poor worm of the earth! We expect to see him repelled with indignation. We look for the thunderbolt to leap forth for his destruction; or to see him flung to the base of the mountain a ghastly corpse. But no. Instead of that we hear the gracious words, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee." The great Jehovah engages to show him all that he can bear in his present state. He is assured that the full unveiled glory of the Godhead he could not see and live. But he agrees to show him all that he can bear; and to deny him nothing that will be possible for his mortal condition.

Here we have a sight which for sublimity and moral grandeur is without a parallel in the history of our race. That hand that guides the stars in their courses, that regulates the course of the flaming comet, that tunes the thunder's roar, and modifies the rage of the lightning's flash, takes this man of mighty faith and puts him in the cleft of a rock, that he may show him his glory and make all his goodness pass before him. Tenderly the great Jehovah puts his hand over his feeble creature, that the full splendor of the Godhead may not consume him. Christ is represented as a rock in the cleft of which we can hide and be safe.

"Rock of ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

When we look at God in Christ we can behold him without a veil between; and yet know that to us he is not a consuming fire.

There was Moses alone with God, amid the deep solitudes of that rugged, wild and sublime scenery. We see him rising early in the morning, brushing away the early dew, and climbing up the craggy summit that he may be alone with God. No doubt that a deep and profound awe rested upon his mind; but there is no evidence that he felt anything like dread. No, he loved God, and perfect love casteth out fear. Hence he was ready to go into any solitary place, to be alone with Him he loved.

Now, my reader, what would you think of such an interview with your Maker; of such a face to face converse with the Lord of the universe? Suppose that you were informed that you might have such an interview this very night, would you gladly accept the offer? Would your heart leap with joy at the proposal? If you knew God through his Son, you would; but if not, your heart would quake within you under a consciousness of guilt. God seen through the law produces nothing but terror. Paul says, "When the commandment came sin revived and I died." He had studied that law under the great doctors of the age, but that was mere theory; but when the spirituality of the law was brought home to his heart, sin after sin came up and filled him with condemnation. In like manner when Moses saw God through the law he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But when he saw God through atoning blood, all his fears fled away as the morning fog disappears before the rising glories of the sun.

No wonder that when Moses came down from the mount, where such glorious manifestations had been made to him, his face shone with luster too bright for the people of Israel to look upon. The impression of God and of eternal truth which he had obtained reflected themselves upon his countenance, and made him appear like an angel of brightness come from the upper glory.

DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES FROM EGYPT.

This personal knowledge of God was of more value to him as a leader than all his previous studies had been. No study, no learning, no eloquence can be a substitute for this, in one who would lead the people of God, or in any way do good in the world. Those sweet hours of communion with heaven were infinitely more valuable to the prophet than all the learning of the Egyptians.

Unconverted reader, I ask you to come to God through Jesus. Do not halt or hesitate, for while you do so the great gulf will soon be fixed between you and heaven. Your character is now forming and will soon be stereotyped forever. Indecision soon becomes decision. You decide for hell while you only think that you are wavering about heaven!

"Go up, go up, my heart,
Dwell with thy God above;
For here thou canst not rest,
Nor here give out thy love.

"Go up, go up, my heart,
Be not a trifler here;
Ascend above these clouds,
Dwell in a higher sphere.

"Let not thy love flow out
To things so soiled and dim,
Go up, to heaven and God,
Take up thy love to him.

"Waste not thy precious stores
On creature-love below;
To God that wealth belongs,
On him that wealth bestow.

"Go up, reluctant heart,
Take up thy rest above;
Arise, earth-clinging thoughts,
Ascend, my lingering love."

## CHAPTER X.

### MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI.

We now approach one of the most important periods in the life of Moses. He has come back to the place where he had received his great commission, according to the promise then made to him: "Certainly, I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee. When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

That wonderful column of cloud and fire, which had heretofore been their heaven-appointed guide, now moved up to the top of Mount Sinai. These were familiar scenes to the man of God. Here, in retirement, away from the din and turmoil of the world, his soul had been disciplined for true greatness. There are scarcely any who have left their impress upon the world for good, who have not been first fitted for that preëminence by retirement.

It was now the purpose of God to display his glory and make known his will to this people, in such a way as had not before been done. He was about to take them into covenant with himself, as a highly honored and favored people; by giving them written laws and established institutions of a typical character. If they would obey his voice, and walk according to the statutes he would give them, he promised to make them his peculiar pleasure above all nations; and the people cried out, as with one voice: "All that the Lord has spoken will we do."

But before the law was to be proclaimed three days were to elapse as days of preparation. Outwardly they were to wash and cleanse themselves, and inwardly they were to be filled with a deep conviction of their own sinfulness, and of the holi-

ness of that Great Jehovah who was about to address them. A barrier was placed around the mountain, across which neither man nor beast was to pass; for even to touch the sacred enclosure was to incur the penalty of instant death.

We can easily conceive something of the solemn hush of expectation which would fall upon the people, while all the preparations were going on. Many an anxious and eager look would be turned towards that rugged mountain, and many conjectures would be whispered from mouth to mouth, regarding the events about to take place.

At last the morning of the third day dawns. The whole masses are moved with one common excitement. The camp is all alive under the influence of thrilling expectations. At the doors of the tents are seen crowds of anxious faces, waiting to know what is next to be done. The proclamation of Moses is spread. among them, calling upon them to come and meet with God. There they stand in solemn awe, every tongue silent, and every murmur hushed. The deep and profound stillness of the vast throng is at last broken by the outburst of the elements. The mountain seemed shaken to its very foundations, vivid sheets of blinding flame came from out of the dark cloud, and terrific crashes of thunder made the most careless tremble. A black cloud wraps Sinai from view; and, piercing through that cloud, and breaking upon the ears of the trembling people, comes the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud. God has come down amid that fire and smoke, and not only do the millions of Israel tremble, but the mountain waves to and fro under the tramp of God's footstep; while the very earth quivers at the presence of its Lord. Ah! we can imagine how, with pale faces and quivering lips, friends would cling to each other; and children, with screams of distress, entreat their mothers to carry them from the dreadful scene.

But hark! another sound is heard: it is the voice of God commanding Moses to come up to him to the mount. Will he go up amid the smoke and tempest, and the sounding of Heaven's dread artillery? Every eye is fixed upon him; but he does not hesitate for a moment. With calm and tranquil look

he moves forward through the boundary line, and is lost to sight as he enters the cloud. For forty days and nights he there remained alone with Jevovah. There he received the ten commandments, inscribed by the finger of God himself, upon two tables of stone. This whole scene is awfully grand, and brings before our minds the solemn events of the day of judgment, when the trumpet shall sound and its peals echo from pole to pole, break upon the ear of the slumbering dead, and bring them forth to give an account of the deeds done in the body.

We are told that such was the effect upon the people, of the sights and sounds of Sinai, that, retreating in terror from the mountain, they cried out to Moses: "Speak thou to us; but let not the Lord speak to us lest we die." Oh, happy those who, in the day of account shall have the Great Advocate to come between God and them, claiming them as the purchase of his own blood.

While standing at Sinai there are some most important lessons that we may learn. One of these is the greatness of the God with whom we have to do. When man was first called into being the law of his Lord was written upon his heart, engraved upon his very soul, and no scenes of terror were required to impress it upon his mind. His soul as naturally ascended to God as the grass grows upwards, or as the rivers run down hill. But he became a rebel, and the law had again to be proclaimed, amid those displays of power of which we have spoken. That God still holds man to a strict accountability. We must soon meet Him; and it must be either as pardoned or unpardoned sinners. It cannot be doubted that it must be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a being whose law and gospel have both been dispised. Oh come then to a shelter from the stormy blast, provided by infinite love! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, while trying to put the rags of your own righteousness in the place of the spotless robe which Jesus has provided.

In the conduct of the people of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, we see an awful proof of the depravity of our race.

Scarcely had the sound of the thunders and the trumpet and the voice of the Lord died away upon their ears, than we see them upon their knees before an idol God of their own making. O how base and ungrateful! The Lord had delivered them from bondage the most degrading and painful; had made them a highway through the waters of the sea, the surging billows of which found a grave for their enemies; had brought waters from the flinty rock, and rained down bread from heaven; and yet all this is forgotten. The same place that had but lately witnessed their pale faces and trembling fears, their pledges publicly given that they would serve the Lord, now witnesses their profane mirth, mingled with their horrid idolatry.

In them we see a true picture of ourselves. How often have we broken our vows and falsified our best resolutions. How often we have forgotten God and turned to our idols. Our proper place is in the dust before Him. It is natural for us to think highly of ourselves, but we can gain nothing by such folly. It may be very painful to know the worst about ourselves, but thus only can we know the best about Jesus. We must be emptied of self in order to be filled with Christ.

This law given, amidst such solemnity, was good and just and perfect. It was worthy of our love and obedience. It was the moral likeness of the Creator, and had his glorious perfections stamped upon it. To violate the law was to incur great guilt, and bring upon the soul a tremendous curse. That curse is on every man out of Christ. No attempts of his own can ever remove it. No tears, no prayers, no reformation of conduct can bring the soul from under its condemnation. There is but one name given under heaven that can bring us deliverance. It is the name of Jesus. He has kept that law, honored it, and magnified it. He bore the curse of it for us; and none need fall under its condemnation if they go to him by simple faith.

We are told of a poor boy, a shoeblack in one of our Eastern cities, who had heard the story of the cross at a mission Sabbath school. He was stricken with disease, and expected to die. His teacher went to see him and found both his

parents drunk, and the dying boy quite neglected. "Shall I bring you a nurse or medicine?" said the teacher. "No, I only want to ask you two questions. Did Jesus die for all of us?" "Yes, my boy, he did." "Well, will he save all who come to him?" "Yes, he will." "Thank God he has saved me," said the dying boy, and his head fell upon his breast. His soul had gone to be forever with the Lord.

"Grace is flowing like a river;
Millions there have been supplied;
Still it flows as full as ever
From the Savior's wounded side."

Our Lord's substitution was a perfect one. The blood shed was that of God in our nature; and therefore can wash away the blackest stains. Had he been but a man, we might well be afraid to venture our eternal all upon him. No where can we see the beauty of the gospel more clearly than at Sinai. There we learn that by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified. In the midst of terror and flashing lightnings and rolling thunders the law came, while humanity trembled before its just and infallible demands; but the gospel came in the stillness of the night, spoken by the sweet voices of angels, and telling of peace and the good will of God to men. The law says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" the gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The law comes with frowns and threatenings; the gospel with smiles and invitations. The law wounds; the gospel heals. The law kills; the gospel makes alive.

Blessed be God, the gospel reveals the greatest of Saviors for the greatest of sinners. He is mighty to save. He comes traveling in the greatness of his strength, with garments dyed in blood, and hands stretched out to save you from going down to the pit. In the French Revolution we are told of a young man who was condemned to the guillotine, and shut up in one of the prisons. He had many friends who loved him well, but one who loved him above all others. How did that person prove this? Why, by giving up his life for him. It was his

own father, and when the lists were called, his name being the same as the son's, he answered for him, rode out in the gloomy death-cart for him, and for him had his head cut off by the cruel instrument of death. In this see a faint picture of the love of your Savior. Your name was on the condemned list. You would surely have died. But Jesus took your place. Come to him and your name will no longer be on the condemned list; for he takes your condemnation upon himself. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ. They are set free forever.

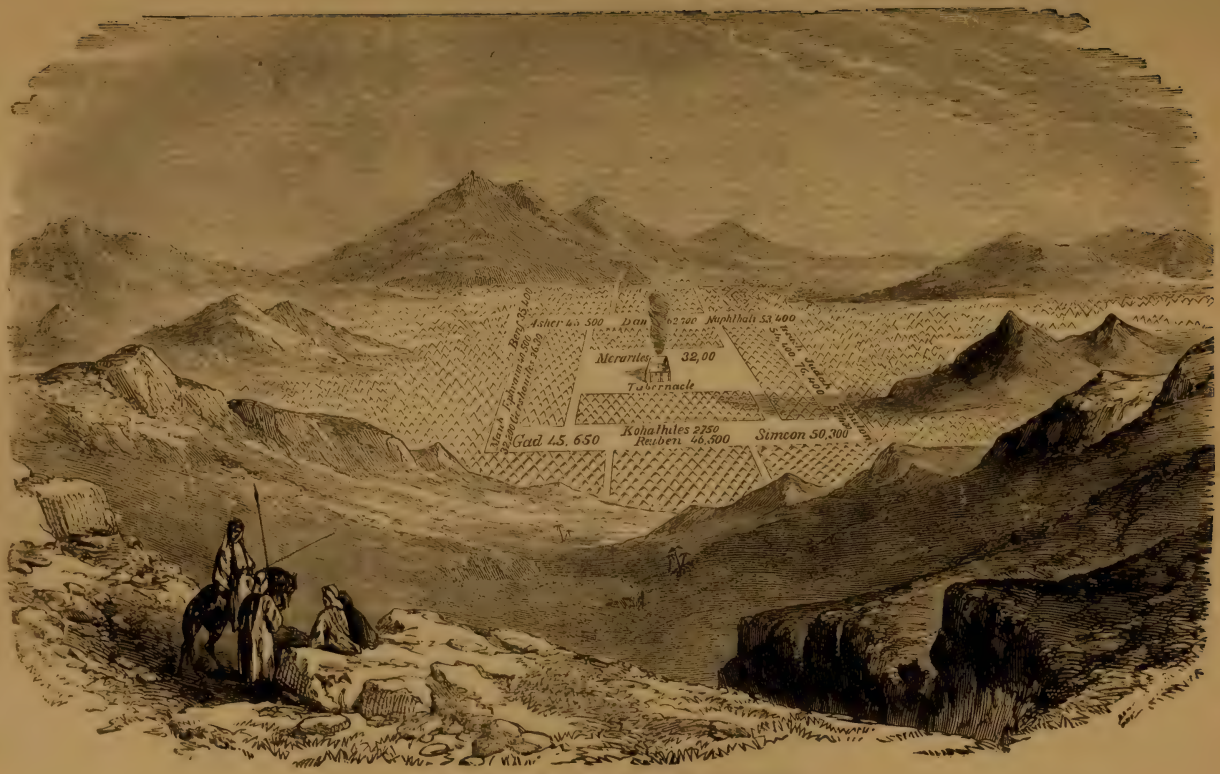
Leaving the solemn scenes of Mount Sinai the Israelites were marched into the wilderness of Paran. Here the old spirit of discontent and rebellion began to foment, and soon broke out against the Lord and his servant Moses. Even the long forbearance of God has an end, and his displeasure was kindled against them so that multitudes were destroyed. In their vile ingratitude they complained of the very bread that was rained down to them from heaven to eat. Such constant murmuring and complaining began to weigh down the spirit of the man of God, so that he felt the burden of governing such a people too heavy for him, and called to the Lord for deliverance. His prayer was answered, and he was directed to choose out seventy elders as a judicial court, to attend to the affairs of this great people. This was no doubt the origin of the great Jewish Sanhedrim, which was in full operation in the days of our Lord.

And here a circumstance occurred which presents the spirit of Moses in a noble light. It seems that the spirit of prophecy had been given to two young men of the camp, named Eldad and Meclad. Some of the prophet's friends being jealous for his honor, told him of this and wished him to put a stop to it. But he had a mind lifted infinitely above all such paltry jealousy. He only wanted good to be done, he cared not where or by whom. His exalted reply was, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them." What a beautiful magnanimity was here displayed. It reminds us of the spirit and temper shown by

another great man, many centuries afterwards, that is Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. In his day there were some who preached the gospel out of envy, and others from a malignant wish to add to his afflictions, already heavy enough; but instead of returning evil for evil, his great heart of love spoke out in the noble words, "Notwithstanding the gospel is preached; and in this I rejoice; yea, and will rejoice." There are some small, paltry minds, who cannot rejoice in good done, unless it be in connection with their own individual efforts. They are ever trumpeting abroad what they have done and what they have attempted; while the self-denying efforts of others are past by with indifference or silence. O, how unlike the spirit of the Lord Jesus!

There are others who take but little interest in the work of God, unless in connection with their church or their denomination. Souls may be converted in hundreds and thousands in other churches, but it fills their souls with no gladness, but often with a doubtful shake of their heads they seek to cast discredit on the whole matter. Now this is far from the lovely spirit of the gospel. As long as good is done and precious souls saved, let us rejoice in it, and give the work our fullest sympathy and heartiest coöperation.

We have known some ministers who showed themselves somewhat jealous of the successful labors of laymen. They seem to think that their peculiar preogatives were being encroached upon, and that they must stand up for their professional dignity. This is as silly as it is wicked. The world can never be converted by ministers alone. They cannot do all the work that must be done, and there is a certain class to whom they cannot gain access as easily as laymen can. Besides, the Bible nowhere tells us that ministers have an exclusive right to preach the gospel—a grand monopoly of the work of saving sinners. The Bible says, "Let him that heareth say, Come!" By teaching in the Sabbath school; by distributing tracts; by visiting from house to house; and where they have talents for the work, by preaching in destitute places, in school-houses, in prisons, in the open air, or wherever the masses of the people




ENCAMPMENT OF THE ISRAELITES.

congregate; the whole membership of the church is to be employed. Happy that minister who knows how to organize the hosts of the Lord: and can prove himself a skillful leader, well pleased if the Lord condescends to make the humblest of his members, more useful than himself. But that narrow-minded bigot who, standing upon his professional dignity, looks coldly upon all such efforts, can neither have the approbation of God nor of good men.

It is certainly one of the most encouraging signs of the times that God is raising up and qualifying so many laymen to engage in his work. As we see them go forth with the love of Christ in their hearts, with fervent zeal, with ready speech, and with ability to sway the minds of the masses of men, they bear all the evidences of being heaven-sent. In such numbers have these sprung up in America, in Britain, and in Germany, that we cannot but regard it as one of the signs of the coming of a brighter day for Zion. The Lord is choosing these men from all classes and conditions of life. In Scotland and in Canada he has sent some forth from the ranks of the titled nobility, who, in the drawing-rooms of the rich, as well as in the humble home of the poor, are publishing the glad tidings. In other cases he is sending out young men who, working at their mechanical employments for their own support, have gone from town to town, telling the simple story of the cross with great power and wonderful success. In other cases persons are converted from the lowest and most degraded of the people, living way down at the very bottom of society, and these have carried the truths of salvation into the circles that the minister of the gospel could not reach, and could effect but very little if he did. Glory to God for all this! The work is His; and woe to the man who would cast the least obstacle in the way in order to sustain the interests of any particular class.

Let the minister seek to make every member of his church a co-worker with himself and with God, in the world's deliverance from sin. Let every young convert be taught to be a worker for Jesus every day of his life. Let them understand that to cease working for the Savior is a strong evidence of

blacksliding of heart. Let there be a noble emulation of who shall do most in their own spheres, and according to the talent committed to them, for the honor of the gracious Master. Let all ministers cultivate the noble spirit of Moses. "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets."

We come now to an event which is full of the richness of gospel truth, and which shows how the wisdom and goodness of God can bring out of the wickedness of man that which will be of world-wide benefit to our race. It has been truly said, that sin is the most expensive thing in the whole world. Whether it is pardoned or unpardoned, it costs an infinite price. If pardoned, it costs the precious blood of God's own Son; if not pardoned it costs an eternity of woe. God will not do anything to lower the dignity of his own law. It has been dishonored by wicked men and devils; but all that God does for his creature's eternal welfare must be done in such a way as to honor that law in the highest degree. That law is essential to the happiness of all his intelligent creatures. Hence its honor must be kept up, whatever it costs. It did cost a vast sacrifice, but it was freely given. "Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, were ye redeemed; but with the precious blood of the Son of God."

While the Israelites lay encamped at Mount Hur, King Arad came out in a secret manner and took a number of them prisoners. He gained nothing by this, however, for the men of war went forth and destroyed his cities. This success so filled them with pride that they thought they could conquer the whole land, and march directly into Canaan. Hence they murmured about the length of the way by which the Lord was leading them, and displayed generally a very seditious spirit. As a punishment fiery serpents were sent among them, the bite of which was deadly. Numbers were dying all over the camp, and the people, repenting of their conduct, entreated Moses to plead with the Lord on their behalf. This he did, and with great success. And the Lord said unto Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall

live." "And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

That this was directly typical of the Lord Jesus we learn from his own words to Nicodemus. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life." In both cases the object was to save dying men. The bite of the serpent was sure death, unless a remedy had been provided; and so sin is certain destruction to the soul, had not a Savior been provided.

Whoever looked at the brazen serpent was cured. It might be an old, hoary-headed sinner, or it might be a youth of tender years and amiable impulses; but both were to be saved in the same way. The man, at the very point of death, whose blackened and bloated form told of his near approach to eternity; and the man who had just been bitten, and could see no danger at all in his present state, were both to be saved by looking at the same object. So it is with the plan of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. The vilest transgressor and the most moral and amiable sinner, must come in the same way; trusting alone in Christ's merits. This has been a great stumbling block to many a proud soul. Here, for example, is a pirate just come from the slippery deck of his vessel, his hands red with the blood of murder. The vilest passions gleam from his eyes, and his lips burn with the most horrid blasphemies. But the very first time he hears the gospel he is cut to the heart and begins to cry for mercy. His sins roll up before him in terrific array; and as if they were mountains of lead, he feels that they are dragging him down to perdition. But suddenly he hears the Lord telling him, that His blood can cleanse from all sin; and that whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out. He believes it, takes God at his word, and is at once saved. A sense of peace and pardon takes possession of his soul. He knows that his sins are all forgiven him for Jesus' sake As an adopted child he can go with confidence into the

presence of the heavenly Father, and worship him without a cloud between.

But here is an amiable, kind-hearted man, whose life glides smoothly on in acts of benevolence and good-will to his fellow-men. In all the relations of life, he is strictly moral and dutiful. In short, in many respects he is regarded by his neighbors as a model man. Yet inwardly he has a sinful heart. He does not love God with all his soul. He has, in thought and feeling, broken God's law every hour of his life. The curse of that law is upon him. From that curse he can only be saved by the same means that saved the blood-stained murderer. He must come emptied of self, a poor hell-deserving sinner as the other came; and be saved by the blood of Jesus alone. He must count all his morality and outward goodness as doing nothing for him in the way of obtaining eternal life. But will he do it? Will not his pride rebel against this humbling and mortifying plan of mercy? Alas! many are constantly doing so; and publicans and harlots rush into the kingdom of heaven, while they shut themselves out by their self-righteousness. As the wounded Israelites were saved by simply looking at the brazen serpent lifted up, so all sinners are to be saved by a look of faith at the Lord Jesus. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of ye earth."

In the case of the Israelites the remedy was perfect. When God's direction was complied with, there was not a single case of failure. Not one could stand up and say, I have tried the remedy; it has done me no good; I must die. So in the whole history of the world never man came to Jesus by faith, and was turned away unsaved. None can say, I have tried the blood of Jesus; it may have saved others, but it is not able to save me. Nay, in every case the remedy has been immediate in its saving power. It is a present salvation. If there is any delay it is on the part of the sinner; for with God *now* is the acceptable time. The remedy is divinely certified never to fail. It is not like those human nostrums, certified to cure the sick and the dying, and that for a moment enkindle hope in the bosom of despair, only to cast them back into the bitter

anguish of hope deferred. No, the whole countless multitude of the redeemed in heaven and on earth unite in singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; for he has washed us from our sins in his own blood."

In the brazen serpent lifted up we see the necessity of faith in the work of salvation. Men looked at the serpent, believing what God said as to its curative power. Even the people living under that dark dispensation knew very well that that piece of brass was only a type, and that there was nothing in it to save them. They knew that the principle thing was faith in the true word of God regarding it. These Hebrews got the healing power by simply doing what God bid them. Suppose that a wounded man had applied some of his own remedies, having more faith in them than he had in God's, and yet to please his neighbors, or as a kind of experiment of his own, would go out and look at the brazen serpent, he would have received no good. His want of faith would have been dishonor done to God.

Faith has a mighty power in the affairs of men. It binds families and nations together. Without it the wheels of commerce could not revolve for a single day. Of the power of faith I lately met with the following illustration. Admiral Dupont was telling Admiral Farragut the reason why he failed to enter Charleston harbor with his splendid fleet of ironclads. He gave first one reason, then another and another. Farragut stood silent till he got through, and then said: "Ah, Dupont, there was one more reason." "What was that?" "You didn't *believe* you could do it." Now if faith is so important in the affairs of men, is it any wonder that it should be so important when God speaks to his creatures.

Suppose that a wounded Israelite had given as a reason why he should not look at the brazen serpent, that he was not yet sick enough, that he did not yet suffer enough, but that by and by when he felt in greater danger, he would do what was required. Would you not regard this as exceedingly absurd? And yet there are those who are waiting to feel themselves greater sinners, waiting to feel deeper convictions before they

come to Jesus. My reader, you know that you are a sinner and that you need a Savior; well, that is enough. Come as you are. If you wait for anything you are not likely to come at all. Or if you do, it will be after wearing your life out in trying human plans, that only being increased guilt upon your soul. Let me urge you now to resolve, that turning away from every false way you will at once go to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

When a wounded Israelite looked at the brazen serpent he would at once *know* that he was cured. He would not say, I hope I am, but I have often many doubts and fears. Thus the soul that comes to Christ has a divine certainty given—an unclouded confidence imparted to him. And yet many of the people of God are almost afraid to take that comfort from the gospel which it is fitted and intended to give, lest they should be too bold and manifest a lack of that proper humility that becomes a sinner.

Now if we ourselves had anything to do with obtaining this assurance, then we might well have doubts about it. But it is not so. The ground of our confidence is entirely independent of anything that we have done or can do. It depends alone upon the sufficiency of Christ's death and the veracity of God's word. My certainty of being accepted is made to turn upon this point, did Jesus die for sinners like me, and is God speaking the truth when he says I can be forgiven for the sake of what he has done? Assurance in this case is honoring the faithfulness of God, and doubt is casting discredit upon his veracity. If a friend comes and makes a statement to you, and you entertain doubts about it, you, in that case, dishonor his credibility. If he is a man of truth, and you have long known him as such, you have no right to have any doubts at all. So it is in regard to our assurance of salvation. The Apostle John says, "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater." Jesus always referred to the truth of what he said as the reason why he expected it to be believed. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"

Here it is where many believers make a great mistake. They

look within themselves for a ground of assurance, and examine their own feelings and experience, to find a rock of confidence on which to build. No wonder they fail. God's true saying concerning his Son is the true foundation on which to rest; and the soul that does so shall never be confounded. Paul called his hearers to witness, that he came declaring unto them the testimony of God. Not his testimony, not his feelings, nor his experience, but the word of the God of truth. O surely if we can be certain of anything, it must be what rests upon such testimony!

An infidel had got a woman to believe his pernicious doctrines. When she was dying he said to her, "Hold fast, Mary." "I can't hold fast, for you have given me nothing to hold by." He had taught her to doubt, but had given her nothing to believe. How different with the Christian who rests upon the truth of God. He can look death and judgment in the face with an assurance that earth and hell cannot shake, for he knows that his Divine Master can not deny himself. The strong bulwark of salvation behind which the believer stands was built by Jehovah, and it is a burning shame for us to doubt our security while standing there.

"My friend, God does not ask thy tears,
Nor aught that thou canst give;
Thy prayers can never save thy soul,
'*Believe*,' and thou shalt live.

"The work was finish'd long ago,
All merit set aside,
When Jesus, in the sinner's stead,
Upon Mount Calvary died.

"He there became a substitute,
The sinner's debt to pay—
He brought in everlasting life
For all who will obey.

"And Jesus risen from the dead
Is now the proof to thee,
That all the debt was fully paid
Upon the cursed tree.

"There's nothing left for you to give,
Nothing for you to pay—
If you but trust in Jesus' blood,
You may be saved to-day.

"Saved, if you simply place your trust
In God's beloved Son,
And only rest your faith upon
The work which *He* has done.

"Thus having Christ by living faith,
You stand before the throne,
In all *His* perfect spotlessness—
*His* righteousness alone.

"Then cease from all thy useless toil,
Thou art not asked to give—
God tells thee Christ has paid the debt.
'*Believe, and thou shalt live.*'"

## CHAPTER XI.

### MOSES ON MOUNT PISGAH.

We come now to contemplate Moses in the closing days of his life. Properly speaking, a good man never dies. His character is brightened by the years that roll on, lives through all time and, like a fixed star, shines with undiminished luster. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." Such men live not for themselves, but for others. Their lives are a complete consecration to the good of humanity. Not in dreamy, selfish ease did they spend their days on earth, but filled with the love of God, these heroic souls labored and suffered and died, to add to the sum total of human happiness.

Such characters triumph over death, and while passing away from earth leave to mankind the noblest legacy—that of a holy example. It is not wealth, nor distinguished birth, nor brilliant genius, but GOODNESS that imparts to a man true immortality. Men say that such a man is dead, but his usefulness lives right on. He may be laid in the silent grave, but his holy acts of self-denying zeal defy the power of death and the grave to cast over them the pall of oblivion.

How strikingly is all this seen in the case of Moses. Here is true principle and Godlike character embodied and personified. We now see him closing up his earthly career. Through countless perils and trials he had led the chosen people to the very borders of the promised land. We see the tents of the Israelites stretching away over hill and plain, and looking picturesque and beautiful in the rays of the morning sun. The face of nature is calm and beautiful. All around is sweet repose—a holy quiet. On the morning of that day so memorable, when the prophet is to take farewell of the people that he had loved so well, and for whom he had suffered so much; we see

the people gathering together from every quarter, till they stand there a mighty host. Then comes the farewell address of their great leader, and his parting benediction. That was a solemn moment when the man of God cast his eye over that vast sea of faces for the last time. He remembered the past with prophetic power, looked into the future, and the tenderest emotions rushed like a mighty river through his soul. They are met for the last time on earth, and he speaks to them in terms the most fit and memorable. It is, ineded, a wonderful address. For pious fervor, for bold imagery, for melting tenderness, for faithfulness of rebuke, and for the impetuous rush of sweeping and majestic eloquence, it casts into the shade the greatest orators of Greece and Rome. It was heaven-inspired. He was but the trumpet through which the voice of the Lord sounded; and with what thrilling pathos do those words fall upon our ears, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

But his work is done, and well done. His death-warrant is signed, and the decision from which there is no appeal has gone forth. We see him turn away from the weeping multitude, and with eye undimmed and vital energy still strong within him, begin to ascend the mount where he was to die. He did not look like a dying man, for his physical system bore no signs of decay. His Lord, however, wanted him for higher service, and to fill and satisfy his soul with unspeakable delights. What a lovely sight, to see that hale old man, with such a sweetly composed look upon his face, climbing up to his grave. Never king went with greater alacrity to his throne than did this venerable saint of God to meet with death. At last he stands upon Pisgah's summit looking on the magnificent scene that opens before him. Every object is bathed in light and beauty, and his soul is filled with delight as he looks at last upon the fair land of promise.

Away yonder, in the distance, flows the Jordan, hastening to empty itself into the Dead Sea; its waters flashing and sparkling in rays of the sun. We can imagine him standing on some gray rock, and looking with intense eagerness upon

a land that for forty years had been so much in his thoughts. Away on his right he sees the snow peaks of Mount Lebanon, gleaming like a huge mass of crystal in heaven's light. There, too, is the hill of Zion, where in coming years the beautiful temple will be built, and multitudes of his descendants go up to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. When he turns and looks to the left, some spots that are to be the most memorable on earth meet his views. There he sees Bethlehem, where the world's Savior is to be born; and there is Mount Calvary, where he is to die in untold agony, the just for the unjust. It is not too much to suppose that his Lord told him of those places, and of what was to occur upon them; and if so, with what emotions must his soul have been filled!

But suddenly a new light breaks upon him. He begins to see the spiritual instead of the material, eternal things instead of temporal. A new light breaks upon his astonished view; a light more brilliant than anything he had ever conceived of before; and in comparison with which the sun in his brightness would look like a dark spot. It is the light of glory, the brightness of his future hope. He has reached the pearly gate of the city of God. Angels open and bid him welcome. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and many others of whom he wrote, press forward to hail his entrance with delight. Peals of ravishing music, and bursts of triumphant praise, break upon his ear. O, thrice happy soul! Thy sorrows are ended, thy immortal joys are begun, never, never to end!

But look at the top of Pisgah! What is that which lies upon the old gray rock? It is the corpse of Moses. The immortal spirit is in heaven, and that is only the tabernacle of clay. We know not how long he was dying, nor what were the last earthly words he spoke to his Lord. No human friends were with him in his last moments; but he needed them not, for "beneath him were the everlastlng arms." He had the most magnificent funeral ever given to mortal man. God, himself, buried him, and there his flesh rests in hope as the ages roll away, his grave unknown to mortals.

The God that he served and loved so well took care of his dust, and the secret of his resting-place is shut up in the Divine mind till the morning of the resurrection. Many a traveler may pass over the sacred spot without knowing it. There the dust of the man of God reposes undisturbed, "with the thunder of the passing storm as his only dirge." For this concealment Jehovah had, no doubt, good reasons. We have seen how prone these Hebrews were to idolatry; and had they known the place of his sepulcher they might have profaned it in such a way. In this way the Lord put his condemnation upon all superstition. We know even in this dispensation of superior light and knowledge, what a traffic has been kept up in the bones of persons called saints, and what pretended miracles have been wrought by them. Very likely the bones of Moses would have been preserved and carried about with them. To help them in time of battle, to bring them rain in time of drouth, to drive away pestilence and disease, and to work all kinds of charms, these bones might have been resorted to. But by keeping the place of his burial secret the Lord rendered this forever impossible.

We know that the Israelites were liable to fall into such superstitious practices from the way that they treated the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. This serpent, it seems, was preserved, and in the days of Hezekiah they had begun to worship it. This filled that good man with a holy indignation, so that he brake it in pieces that this temptation to idolatry might be forever out of their way.

Christ is said to have abolished death; that is, he has disarmed it of its stings, and its power to hurt the believer. A new life reigns in the renewed soul and takes possession of it forever. The earthly tabernacle is subject to death because it has in it the seeds of decay; but when Jesus rose from the grave, death was swallowed up in victory. Just as sure as he lives, we shall live also, in the whole of our nature. It was not one part of our nature that he undertook to deliver from the effects of sin; but the perfected work shall show body and soul renewed and reigning in life through Jesus Christ.

With such a sublime confidence in the soul, no wonder that the Christian's death is one of triumph. He has grasped the grand central truth of Christianity; and bigger, and better, and brighter than all earthly joys put together is the gladness that fills his whole being. God has always kept the hope of a resurrection, less or more distinctly, before the world. Hence, before the flood, Enoch was translated bodily from this world to be with God; showing that our bodies were capable of such changes as to fit them to live in heaven. Then after the flood, Elijah's translation testified to the same thing. Then our adorable Redeemer rose from the dead; and thus became the first fruits of them that slept. As the great type of our humanity, He showed that the resurrection was not merely a thing possible or probable, but a positive, accomplished fact. The vast, wide dominions of death heard the glad tidings that came from the open tomb of Jesus; and though we may go to the graves of our friends to weep there, it is not with the sorrow of the infidel or of the heathen, who have no hope. The Savior himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Here is the hope of Christ's people—the hope of the new creation. There our perfected humanity, made like unto Christ's, shall start upon a glorious career of immortal bliss.

It is called eternal life. It will be eternal life to both body and soul. All the promises of future good from the beginning of the creation, are, as it were, condensed into these words, *eternal life*. All that the soul can enjoy, with all its vast capacity of progression, and drawing forever from the unlimited fullness of God, is implied in the words, eternal life. When millions of ages shall have passed away, it will still be, eternal life. Could we add together the age of our world to that of all the stars, and then add the age of every redeemed soul to the age of every angel in heaven, we would have a period so vast as to confound the mind; but still it would be as nothing, compared with eternal life. When all these years would have passed away, the blood-bought throng would still be singing: "The gift of

God is eternal life!" We know that we must live forever in some condition. Everywhere, the vast world over, men feel that they have an immortal part within them. Savage and sage alike believe that they must live forever. But it is to be remembered that there is such a thing as banishment from God; which in the Bible is called eternal death. It is only the soul that has been taken to the bosom of Divine Love, and that has heard the whisper of the still, small voice, saying, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish." Who can feel the blessedness of a heaven begun on earth.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial faith, on earthly ground,
By faith and hope may grow."

It is the privilege of all believers to have Pisgah views of heaven. I have been an earnest observer at the death-beds of many Christians, and I know that God gives special grace and support for that trying hour. Clearer light illuminates their minds. Wider and deeper conceptions of the fullness of Christ, fill their hearts to overflowing. Consolation, which in its sweetness tells of its divine origin, is imparted to sustain the soul, as it stands all ready for its mysterious flight. How firm the foot is placed upon the Rock of Ages! How strong the courage, how noble the bearing of the believer in that hour! What a sweet calm—a holy stillness—we have seen come over him, like the calm of the going down of the summer sun, with a golden glory all around. In such circumstances we have seen the looks and the words of Christians bear an aspect almost unearthly. They will often tell you that they hear angelic music. "Listen! Do you not hear it? O, how sweet! how rapturous!" Often they will seem astonished when told that you did not hear anything. Sometimes they speak as if seeing angel convoys. "See, see! there are the shining ones! They have come for me! O, let me go!" And they reach out their cold arms, stiffening in death. Now I have no doubt that they are often permitted to see something of heaven, before going out of the body; and that the soul gets so spiritual as to see

around it its future companions. We know that it was so with Stephen before he died, even when the stones were falling around him and the curses of his enemies were in his dying ears. Thus God's holy ones are comforted. The loving hand of their Savior pulls back the veil, and lets them get a glimpse of their fair inheritance. Let worldly men call this fanaticism and mere rhapsody if they please; I call it Pisgah views, given for loving purposes. Child of God, be comforted! A few more struggles, and you shall be in the calm glory of your Father's house. A few more trials, and you shall be with the unnumbered multitude of the glorified. Your crown is waiting for you; your white robe all fit to put on.

What blessed and joyous welcome will be given to the redeemed, when they land upon the shore of glory. Pastor, there are spiritual children which God has given you, waiting to give you a joyous reception. Mother, there are your loved children, ready to join you in eternal songs of gratitude. Believers, there are your brethren with whom you took sweet counsel on earth. What happy prayer-meetings you used to have. How pleasantly you labored together to promote the Savior's cause. They have got to heaven before you; but they wait and watch for your coming. They hail you, as it were, from the heavenly shore.

> "E'en now by faith we join our hands
> With those who went before,
> Those great and blood-besprinkled bands
> Upon th' eternal shore."

There are some people, even here, that it seems like a little heaven to enjoy their society. To spend an evening with them refreshes and strengthens us by the way, for months afterwards. Think, then, of the society beyond the Jordan. Think of having a long conversation with Enoch, and Moses, and Abraham; and of hearing David striking his heavenly harp to thrilling notes of harmony. Think of hearing Milton, no longer blind, rolling out his deathless numbers. Think of hearing and seeing the great Reformers, Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingle, and many others of whom the world was not worthy. If that man is

peculiarly happy who enjoys these Pisgah views of which we have spoken, how unspeakably happy must he be who is in full possession of the promised land.

Moses enjoyed some privileges that were peculiar to himself; because of the important position he was called to occupy. But a peaceful, happy death was not one of these. That is the privilege of all God's children. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Society may be convulsed to its center; earthly comforts may crumble to ashes in the grasp; the bright lights in our homes may go out one by one in darkness; but peace to live by and to die by, is the assured inheritance of the Christian. With Christ for his treasure, with heaven for his home, with precious promises to pillow his head upon, he can make the dark valley ring with the cry, "I will fear no evil for thou art with me."

When I have spoken about these Pisgah glimpses, I do not mean that any new thing is made known to the soul, that cannot be found in the Bible; no new revelation is given. There are times, however, in the experience of all good people, when portions of the Bible are so illuminated by the Holy Spirit, tha they come with almost the force and the power of a new revelation. Like the blind man whom our Lord cured, who at first saw things dimly, men like trees walking; so truths, of which we had but a dim and shadowy view, are made to stand out in all their lovely proportions. So is it with these Pisgah views. We have a deeper, clearer insight into the deep things of God. There is given to us the spiritual mind, and hence a fuller realization of invisible things of eternity. The things that are seen and temporal, and that used to absorb us so much, have lost their power; and the soul is now engrossed with the things of the world to come.

As the christian nears the eternal world, who can tell how far his thoughts may be carried into the light of a higher revelation of God. I have often seen christians so filled with the love of God, and longing so intensely for his presence, that there seemed a holy impatience for the gate to open and let them go to their Father. I have visited such as their minister,

MOSES ON THE TOP OF PISGAH.

but not as their instructor. I felt that the secret of the Lord was with them, and that they were able to instruct me. I might know a great deal more about theology than they did; but for real heartfelt communion with God, for those joys in religion that words are too poor to describe, for that glory bursting upon their view, of which only angel language could tell, I felt that my proper place was to sit at their feet and learn as a little child. I have watched the lamp of life flickering till it expired; I have seen the dark shadow of death pass over the face, brightened by flashes of glory, and I have cried out, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his."

To the truly spiritual man these views of his heavenly home are given all his journey through. Moses lived in daily fellowship with his God, and was thus changed from glory to glory. The truly spiritually-minded man is a blessing to all who come in contact with him. If you go to his house, he will tell you of a house not made with hands. If you sit at his hospitable table, he will feed you with the bread of life. If you do business with him, he will seek to induce you to buy the pearl of great price. If you injure him, he can forgive you as he himself has been forgiven. If you curse him, he will bless you. He has gone into the heavenly country, and brought us a bunch of the heavenly fruit, to increase our desire for more. Such a man is the highest type of our humanity. Even in old age he brings forth fruit abundantly for God. In the fall of the year you may have seen the withered leaves shining like gold, because the rays of the sun were reflected from them; so the aged saint reflects back upon the world the beams of the sun of Righteousness. How great is the influence of such a life. As a single atom of matter cannot be put in motion without affecting the innumerable other atoms that compose the globe, so is it with human character. We move all around us for good or for evil every day that we live. How important, then, that we should be able to say, "For me to live is Christ."

We conclude the history of Moses with the following beautiful lines:

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.

"And no man dug the sepulcher,
And no man gave it air,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

"That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth,
But no man heard the tramping,
Or saw the train go forth.

"For, without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain's crown
The great procession swept.

"Perchance, the bald old eagle,
On gray Bethpeor's height,
Out of his rocky eyrie
Looked on the wondrous sight.

"Perchance, the lion, stalking,
Still shuns that hallowed spot,
For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

"But when the warrior dieth,
His comrades in the war,
With arms reversed, and muffled drum,
Follow the funeral car.

"They show the banners taken,
They tell his battles won;
And after him lead his masterless steed,
While peals the minute gun.

"Amid the noblest of the land,
Men lay the sage to rest,
And give the bard an honored place,
With costly marble drest,

"In the great Minster transept,
Where lights like glories fall,
And the choir sings, and the organ rings,
Along the emblazoned wall.

"This was the bravest warrior,
That ever buckled sword,
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word.

"And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

"And had he not high honors?
The hillside for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall?

"And the dark rock pines with tossing plumes,
Over the bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that mountain land
To lay him in the grave.

"In that deep grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffinned clay,
Shall break again—most wondrous thought—
Before the judgment day.

"And stand with glory wrapped around
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
With the incarnate Son of God.

"Oh, lonely tomb in Moab's land!
Oh, dark Bethpeor's hill?
Speak to those anxious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.

"God hath his mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him he loved so well."

## CHAPTER XII.

### JOSHUA, THE PIOUS SOLDIER.

Whether it is right for a religious man to engage in war has long been a mooted question among good people. Without going into this discussion we may mention, that war with all its attendant horrors has been permitted by God; and very often overruled by him for the accomplishment of the greatest good. The opening China, containing one-third of the world's population, to the preaching of the gospel was brought about through the means of war. The overthrow of American slavery, with all its accompanying abominations, was effected by the same means. These are recent examples, but the history of the world is full of such cases.

It is also worthy of our notice, that some of the best of men have been engaged in the profession of arms The armies of Cromwell and of the Scottish Covenanters, afford examples of the deepest piety. and show that religion, so far from unfitting for the duties of a soldier, impart to him the highest courage. Col. Gardiner lived very near God, rising early when the army was on the move, in order to have time for prayer and reading the Scripture. Capt. Headly Vicars, in that desperate struggle before Sevastopol, was acknowledged by his superiors to be one of the most efficient young officers in the army, and yet his piety was of the highest type, and his zeal for the salvation of souls unwavering.

Gen. Havelock was one of the bravest and most successful of soldiers in modern times; and yet one of the most consistent of Christians. Lord Harding said of him, "Havelock is every inch a soldier;" and he was every inch a Christian. Once, when some military emergency had arisen, the general in command had ordered out a particular corps, but was told that

they were not fit to take the post of danger, because they were intoxicated. Now, mark what the general next said:—"Call out Havelock's saints: he is always ready, and his men are never drunk." When dying he said to his son, "Come, my son, and see how a Christian man can die." To Sir James Outram, who visited him on his death-bed, he said, "For more than forty years I have so ruled my life that when death came I might face it without fear."

In the late conflict in America, what noble specimens of the Christian soldier were presented before the world. Both among the officers and in the ranks were men who walked with God, and were equally efficient as soldiers of the Republic and as soldiers of the Cross. Their religious convictions led them to leave their comfortable homes, and bid farewell to loving friends, to encounter hardships and perils, the very recital of which makes our souls shudder. And never for a moment did they look back and regret their choice. Who can look upon such true specimens of Christian manhood as Gen. Mitchell and Gen. Rice, without feeling that the true martyr spirit still lives in the church of God. The latter, just before entering the battle in which he was killed, wrote to his mother as follows: "My entire hope is in the cross of my Savior. In this hope I am always happy. I trust that God may again graciously spare my life, as He has in the past; and yet one cannot fall too early if, loving Christ, he dies for his country." Thus, from those high in rank down to the humblest drummer-boy, there were many bright trophies of the power of Christ's gospel to save.

We have been led into these remarks because we are now to consider the character of Joshua, a brave and successful warrior, and as pious as he was brave. By the choice of Moses and the approval of Jehovah, he was put at the head of the Israelitish people and had a responsibility of vast magnitude laid upon him. When God has a work to do he is never at a loss for an instrument to accomplish it. There is no man, however great, who is absolutely necessary to the carrying on of God's work. There never was a man in the world so ne-

cessary that the world could not do without him. Moses would seem to be essential to the very existence of the Jewish nation, but even he can be spared. He is dead, but the designs of the Almighty go on as if he had never lived. This thought may be very humbling and mortifying to the self-importance of some people. The popular minister may think himself necessary to the prosperity, if not to the existence, of the church over which he presides. Some of his injudicious friends have told him so again and again; and in so doing spoke the honest feelings of their hearts. But he is removed, and the work goes on as if nothing had happened. For some time the face that used to look down upon them from the pulpit is kindly remembered and honest regrets are expressed that the voice they loved to hear so well will be heard by them no more; but soon all this will cease, and things will move on as if he had never been. And all this is right enough. Death is not to be permitted to strike with paralysis the whole frame-work of society. When one falls in the ranks of the Lord's army, the Captain of our salvation has another just as good to take his place. The great fight of faith must not stop, for God can raise up, out of the very stones, children to Abraham.

Joshua displayed the boldness and conscientiousness of his character during the life of Moses. On reaching the borders of the land of Canaan, twelve persons were selected from the different tribes, whose duty it was to explore the country and bring back correct information as to its inhabitants, its natural productions and the strength of its fortifications. Dividing themselves into companies, they went forth, passing quietly through the land and obtaining what information they could. Ten of these spies came back with a most doleful report. Taking counsel of their own fears, they represented, with the wildest exaggeration, the people as very numerous, their cities as strongly fortified, and the utter impossibility of ever conquering such a people. They acknowledged, indeed, that the land was all it had been represented for fertility, and even brought specimens of its fruitfulness. But, upon the whole, their report was so discouraging as to create a panic of fear, so

that the voice of weeping was heard all over the camp. Now, Joshua and Caleb had been among the number of spies, and presented quite a different report. They denounced the report of the others as incorrect, and as the result of cowardice. They said, "The land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread to us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not." This showed that Joshua was a man of the right spirit for the enterprise for which he was now called. It is true, a formidable work lay before him; but he had a most sustaining promise from the mouth of Jehovah himself: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Along with the assurance of the Divine presence came a solemn injunction to make the law of God his constant study; yea, to meditate upon it by day and by night. He had a great work before him, and the requisite wisdom for its accomplishment could only be obtained from the statutes of the Lord. That great man, Judge Hale, used to spend a portion of each morning in the study of the Scriptures, however much engaged he might be. He tells us that if this was omitted nothing seemed to go right with him all day. That distinguished writer, Sir William Jones, wrote on the blank leaf of his Bible the following beautiful sentiment: "I have regularly and attentively perused these Holy Scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independently of its Divine origin, contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written." Count Oxenstein, Chancellor of Sweden, said to one who visited him, "All the comfort I have, and all the comfort I take, and which is more than the whole world can give, is the knowledge of God's

love in my heart, and the reading of this blessed Book," laying his hand on the Bible. "You are now," he continued, "in the prime of your age and vigor, and in great favor and business; but this will all leave you, and you will one day better understand and relish what I say to you. Then you will find that there is more wisdom, truth, comfort, and pleasure, in retiring and turning your heart from the world, in the good spirit of God, and in reading his sacred word, than in all the courts and favors of princes." The celebrated John Locke, we are told, spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible; and speaking of it to a young friend, he said, "It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

Joshua now began to make all needed preparation for crossing the Jordan, and taking possession of the promised land. He has the Divine promise to sustain him; but he does not make that an excuse for omitting the use of all proper means of accomplishing his object. He proceeds as if all depended upon himself; and yet relied upon God, as if he could do nothing. This is the true spirit, which all workers in Christ's vineyard should cultivate. Let them work as hard as if all success depended upon their doing so; and yet, by prayer and faith in God, show that in him is their dependence.

Joshua sent out two confidential persons to visit Jericho, to find out something as to its population, its resources, and the strength of its fortification. It was the frontier city of Canaan, and was inhabited by a very wicked and degraded people. There was, however, one person in that city whose heart was moved by the fear of the Lord. This was a woman of tarnished reputation, but who had ceased from her wicked ways, and received the spies into her house with peace. She protected them from the police by hiding them in a secure place, and saved their lives by assisting their escape. She showed her faith in God by saying, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land." She begged them to promise her that when the city was taken, her life and the life of her kindred would be preserved. The promise was given, and the sign of protection

THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE.

for her and her kindred was to be the scarlet line by which she let them down over the wall of the city, being hung up in the window. Now that this woman, once an abandoned character, became a really good woman, is evident from the Apostle Paul placing her in the ranks of the worthies that he mentions in his epistle to the Hebrews: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."

Thus we see that God is indeed no respecter of persons; but that individuals of every condition, of every phase of human life, are received by him through repentance and faith. There is not a depth of degradation, not a sink of human pollution, from which God cannot lift the sinful soul, and make it a bright gem in his crown forever.

"God scatters truths on every side,
Freely among his children all;
And always hearts are lying open wide,
Wherein some grains may fall.

"There is no wind but soweth seed
Of a more true and open life,
Which burst, unlooked-for, into high-souled deed,
With way-side beauty rife."

In regard to this woman's faith, notice how implicit her confidence in the promise of the spies. She does not seem to doubt them for a moment. Sin is always suspicious, and sinners are always distrustful of each other. She had faith in the word of the good men that God sent to her dwelling; and, as the Apostle James says, "Her faith brought forth works." She entertains them at the risk of her own life, hides them from their persecutors, refuses to betray them, and acknowledges the power of the God of Israel. And how much her faith was honored. Honorable mention is made of her by two inspired apostles. From a child of wrath she is lifted up to be a child of God; and from being a citizen of a vile heathen city, she is taken to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Great King.

When the hour of trial came, this woman's faith did not disappoint her. She was not confounded. The city is surrounded

by the invincible hosts of Israel, but she has no fear. The day of doom has at last come for that accursed city. She and her kindred are sitting quietly at her home, when the shrill and penetrating sound of the trumpets of Israel is heard coming nearer and nearer. The avenging army is about to descend upon that city already given over to destruction. Does Rahab turn pale and tremble? No, she looks to the scarlet line in the window, and feels secure. A terrible shout is heard, as if smiting against the very heavens. Hark! there is a fearful crash! The wall of the city has fallen, and as a roaring flood comes rushing on, when the embankment, which for a time restrained it, has broken down, so the triumphant and conquering hosts rush into the city. Does this woman join in the wild scream of despair that is going up from so many voices? No, she has only to look at the scarlet line in the window. The army are now rushing through the streets, each with a sword in his hand, dripping with the blood of the slain. The work of destruction goes on apace. Torrents of blood run down the streets like water. The death-cry is heard every moment breaking upon the air. But this believing woman looks to the scarlet line in the window, and feels calm as if in the heart of a forest. Many a man of war, with bloody weapon in hand, comes to that house, but he looks up and sees the scarlet line in the window, and passes on. But hark! there come footsteps approaching the house—they enter the door—they are coming up the stairs. Has the scarlet line failed to do its work? Has Rahab's faith, after all, been in vain? Has she fallen at last into the hand of the destroyer? No, no; it is only messengers come from Joshua —the very men whose lives she had saved, to bring her and all her kindred out of the city, before it is committed to the devouring flames. The scarlet line *has* done its work. She and those dear to her are safe out of that doomed place. Turning to look behind her, she sees great billows of fire rolling over Jericho and great tongues of flame leaping up as if to the very heavens. Her faith has triumphed and placed her beyond the reach of harm.

May not this scarlet line, under which this household found

protection, be taken as a type of the blood of Jesus? The safety of that house did not depend upon strong preparations made to keep out the men of war. It was not by putting strong bolts upon their doors, or fortifications round their dwelling, that their safety was secured; it was by simply placing the scarlet line in the window. So our salvation is not secured by any act of our own, by any preparation that we may make to save us from the wrath to come; we are saved, if saved at all, by faith in the blood of Jesus.

The peace of that household, amid the destruction all around them, did not depend upon their own feelings or doings. They did not need to sit up all night keeping watch; nor was it necessary to be constantly looking within to examine the state of their own feelings. Their safety depended upon one thing, the scarlet line in the window. Suppose that they had taken it from the window and hung it on the door; or, supposing they had held it in their hands for greater security; they would doubtless have perished. So we can only be saved by acting strictly in accordance with God's way, that is, faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus. Faith in that blood will give peace and assurance forever. Amid the swellings of Jordan, and the terrific scene of judgment, we will fear no evil; for who can lay anything to the charge of those whom God justifies for the sake of his Son.

But we must hasten on with the history of Joshua. The Jordan is past, its waters miraculously opening to let them pass through with the ark of the Lord. While Joshua was examining the fortifications of Jericho a wonderful personage appeared before him, with a drawn sword in his hand. He boldly went up to this person and demanded whether he was for them or for their enemies. The answer was, "Nay, but as the Captain of the Lord's host am I come." Joshua at once understood who this was; and instantly bowed down and worshiped him. For this act he received no rebuke, which he would have received had it been any mere creature that he worshiped. No doubt this was the angel of the covenant, who had on so many occasions appeared to his fathers; who

had so often conversed with Moses, and had now come to put them in possession of the promised land. It was doubtless the Lord Jesus in whose presence he stood, and who, instead of rebuking him for his worship, requested him, as he did Moses at Horeb, to take his shoes off his feet because he stood upon holy ground.

The faith of Joshua was seen in following implicitly the directions of God in regard to the way of taking Jericho. He did not ask, as unbelief would have done, what connection then could be between the blowing of Rams' horns and the tumbling down of stone walls. He promptly did what he was bid, without setting up his own petty reasons or following the plans of other people, and the result was most triumphant. The city was taken, and its very existence blotted out of the record of the cities of the earth. Where can we find a more lovely spectacle than that of a man whose own will is swallowed up in the will of the all-wise Creator. His peace flows like a river, because whatever God does is pleasing to him. With such a man, the good, and perfect, and holy will of God is his delight day and night. To do that will is his meat and his drink; and with all honesty of heart he can say, "Not my will, but thine be done."

At this time a circumstance occurred that showed the strict principles of justice upon which Joshua acted, and the disastrous effect which the conduct of one man may have upon the cause of truth. During the siege of Jericho a strict command was given to the people not to take any part of the spoils of that city, which was to be regarded as accursed and doomed to destruction. Regardless of this command, Achan, a person of rank and influence, stole and concealed a quantity of the spoils. This act was unknown to any one but himself, and he soothed his conscience with the hope that he would escape detection. Shortly after this, Joshua sent out three thousand of his men of war to fight Ai; but God was not with them, as formerly, to give victory to their arms. They met with a terrible repulse, and fled in terror before their enemy. This had a most depressing effect upon the people, and filled the heart

of their general with the deepest anguish. We are told that he "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads." He presented the matter before the Lord in earnest prayer. The reply was, "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel;" and he was directed to find out the guilty man and bring him to punishment.

Meantime Achan was rejoicing in his ill-gotten gain. It is true, he could not wear the beautiful stolen garments, but he could take them out and look at them in the privacy of his own tent; and he could feast his greedy eyes upon the silver and the gold. But his false security is soon broken in upon. God's word to the sinner is, "Be sure your sins will find you out." This is acknowledged, on all hands, to be an uncertain world; but here is one thing that we may be certain of, that sin will find out the sinner and expose him before men and angels. Achan hears that an investigation is about to be made. This makes him very uneasy; but still he puts a brave face upon the matter, perhaps is very loud in denouncing the crime, and in asserting his innocence. The people are all assembled before the Lord; but in such a large crowd he feels comparatively secure. The criminal is to be detected by the casting of lots. The first lot is cast, and the tribe of Judah was taken. His heart throbs strongly now, for that is the tribe to which he belongs. The lot is again cast, and the family of the Zerhiter is taken. Ah! his face is now pale with fright, and his knees smite against each other; for he belonged to that family. He feels that vengeance, like a blood-hound true to the scent, is upon his track. The lot is again cast, and falls upon himself. Miserable man! There he stands pointed out by the finger of God as the guilty man, and as the cause of all the trouble that had befallen his brethren.

Had this man been asked, when he put forth his hand to do this wickedness, if he wished to bring defeat and death into the camp of Israel, he would have spurned the thought. But he went on to gratify his own covetousness and thus

turned the sword of the enemy against his friends. It is thus with inconsistent members of the church of Christ. Ask them if they intend to bring ruin upon the church, to grieve their brethren and almost break the heart of their pastor, and they would repel with indignation such a charge. And yet they are really doing it.

The progress of sin is seen in the case of Achan. There was, in the first place, an undue familiarity with things forbidden. He looked at these spoils, turning them over and over till he began to covet them. The eye is a great inlet to the soul, and the only true safety is to act as David did, "turn away the eyes from beholding vanity." The next step in his sin was, that he coveted these things, and thus the evil had already become intrenched in his heart. Many think that if the sin is confined to the heart there is little harm done; but that is the very place upon which God's eye is fixed. The Christian finds it easy to keep his mere outward actions right; but his heart gives him great trouble. He mourns over its wanderings as did David and Paul, and says, "How long shall vain thoughts dwell within me." As the least spark of fire, if encouraged, would burn a whole city, so evil indulged in the heart will break out in open and disgraceful acts of sin. So was it with Achan. His next step was to put forth his hand and steal the accursed thing. Let the devil get a strong desire for sin lodged in the heart, and then the very first favorable opportunity, when there is little chance of detection and exposure, the open act will be committed. "Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin."

We see in Achan's case that no man can live to himself. Shame, defeat and death were all brought upon the people of Israel by this man's conduct. That protection that covered their heads in the day of battle was withdrawn. Their heavenly friend said, "I will not be with you any more, unless ye put away the accursed thing." This wicked man was more to be feared than all their enemies. If you could find out the wickedest man in a nation, that would be the greatest enemy which that nation has; and yet you might find him very boast-

ful of his patriotism, while his sin was bringing down upon the land the curse of God. Thus the enemy that the church of God has to fear is, not the infidel or the bold blasphemer, but the inconsistent member. These are they that keep back the blessing of the Most High, and bring up a reproach upon the cause of truth that cannot easily be wiped away.

What anguish of heart sinners cause to good men. See Joshua lying upon his face upon the ground, pouring out the deep anguish of his soul before the Lord. Listen to David and Jeremiah pouring out the wail of their sorrowful souls because of the wickedness around them. Sinner! how it adds to your guilt that a praying father has wept in bitterness of soul over you. Did it not add to the guilt of Jerusalem that the gracious Savior wept over her? Ah! yes, these tears will rise up with condemning power in the day of judgment.

Let us learn from Achan's case never to undervalue the power of temptation. At the very time we may think ourselves most secure we may be in greatest danger of a fall. You can meet no temptation in your own strength; for, if you have no better armor than that, the feeblest arrow that Satan aims will pierce you through and through. Peter was never more in danger than when he boasted how firmly he stood.

We may learn, from the example of Joshua, that a good man may be putting prayer in the place of some other duty. He was lying upon his face before the ark, praying, when God said unto him, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Prayer can only succeed when we are using all the means within our reach. We must search out every idol, seek to mortify every sin, and maintain the purity of the church of Christ, else our prayers will be hindered and the work of God cease to advance.

We come now to consider a most striking evidence of Joshua's faith and power in prayer. The Gibeonites, witnessing the powers of the army of Israel, and greatly alarmed for their own safety, sent to the general a deputation, representing that they came from a great distance, and requesting the privilege of forming an alliance with his people. After some

inquiries the heads of Israel gave their consent to this, and the treaty was consummated. But when it was discovered that these Gibeonites were neighbors, the people of Israel were dissatisfied with what their leaders had done and wished the treaty to be annulled. This Joshua refused to do, considering that it would be a violation of public faith. The rest of the Canaanites became enraged at Gibeon, as having acted the part of an apostate nation, and joined to make war against it. Joshua felt in honor bound to protect and defend his allies, and the result was, a great battle was fought, in which his arms were victorious.

It was on this occasion that a great miracle was wrought in answer to prayer. God arrested the sun in the heavens in order that a total defeat of his enemies might be effected. Much difficulty and many perplexities have been raised regarding this miracle. The fact, however is, Divinely authenticated by the word of truth; and as to the way in which it was done, that was God's matter, with which we have nothing to do. Surely, no one will say that anything is too hard for God. He has laws that govern in the works of creation, but these laws do not govern Him. He has not enslaved himself by his own laws so that he cannot hear the prayer of his own people and work miracles for their deliverance if he deems it proper. Men talk about fixed laws as if even God himself could not break them. This is surely setting up the laws of nature above the Creator himself. As the maker of a watch can stop it when he pleases, putting it back or forward at pleasure; so the Maker of all things still holds the entire control of the great fabric of creation that came from his own hands.

We may not follow Joshua through all those wars by which the land of promise was at last put in full possession of Israel. Infidels have made an outcry against Joshua as a blood-thirsty man, and destitute of all humanity, because of the way he treated the Canaanites. But it should be remembered that they were destroyed by the direct command of God, and that the terrible judgments that came upon them were caused by their wickedness, which made them ripe for devouring vengeance.

Divine mercy and patience, that had been so long with them, now retired from the field and left justice to do its vengeful work. God sent the same judgments upon the Jews on account of their sins, at a subsequent period of their history, when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans and her people caused to pass through sufferings, the bare recital of which makes our blood run cold. But those infidels that denounce Joshua have not a word to say against Titus on account of his cruelty.

When the whole land was conquered, Joshua made a wise division of it among the different tribes. He kept nothing for his own family, but the people gave him Timnath-serah, where the rest of his life was spent in inward and outward peace. With the approval of God, with an inward consciousness of having done his duty, and with the love and gratitude of the whole nation, his days glided peacefully on. He lived one hundred and ten years, and when he died was carried to the grove, amid great manifestations of sorrow by the whole people for whom he had done so much.

When this great and good man was near eternity, and with the hallowed influence of coming glory upon his mind, he gathered the people together to give them his parting address He enters upon a solemn review of all the Lord had done for them in the past, for the double purpose of exciting within their minds gratitude for what they had received, and trust for the future. A review of the past is very profitable, if it is done in the right spirit. We can then look upon our sins and short-comings after the excitement and passion that accompanied them have passed away ; and are humbled in the very dust on account of them. We see the hand of God in so marked a manner, leading us in the right way and by the best means, though we did not think so at the time ; and we see his wisdom overruling our very faults for our good.

Joshua goes on, in a most earnest manner, to warn them against the idolatry around them. They must not have any intimacy with idolaters, must not intermarry with them, nor in any way put themselves into danger of falling into their abominations. We are to shun the very appearance of evil.

To dabble around the edges of sin is the surest way to be engulfed in destruction. He warns them of the terrible desolation that would come upon them if they departed from the living God; and that as he had been faithful to his promises, they would find him equally true in his threatening. His address reminds us of the words of Paul, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

The Lord prolonged the life of his servant so that he was able to deliver a second address. This he did at Shechem, a place of blessed memories. This was the place where Abraham settled on his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him with words of comforting promise. Near it stood the mounts Gerizim and Ebal, where the people renewed their covenant upon their coming into the land. The spot selected then was calculated to remind them of two things, God's promise to them, and their promise to God. Joshua goes into a history of Jehovah's dealings with them, and then makes a pointed appeal to them to serve the Lord in sincerity and truth. He brings his remarks to a close with the solemn appeal, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." The people, as with one voice, pledged themselves to serve the Lord; and in memory of the event a great stone was set up, Joshua uttering the solemn words, "This stone shall be a witness unto us.'

We see the people, with tears in their eyes, turn away to their several homes, while the venerable servant of the Lord goes to his home to die. Of his death-bed, or the words he uttered there, we know nothing. No doubt his end was peaceful as the going down of the summer sun. Of the blessedness of his admission into the heavenly Canaan, his meeting with Moses with whom he had enjoyed such sweet intercourse on earth and, above all, his enjoyment in the presence of the Lord, whom he had loved and served so faithfully, we can form but a faint conception. His faith had ended in sight, and his expectation in full enjoyment.

Thus the redeemed of the Lord are brought safely and surely to their fair inheritance. The Captain of our salvation,

of whom Joshua was a type, is leading his people through many conflicts, only to bring them off more than conquerors. And when the last redeemed soul shall be gathered from earth and led into the heavenly glory, what a jubilee of rejoicing there will be in that sinless congregation. It will then be seen that not one of all the promises have failed, and rising and swelling into a rapturous song, their hearts will be poured out in the words, "Our Jesus has done all things well."

"Midst crosses, Faith her triumph knows;
The palm-tree pressed more vigorous grows;
Go tread the grasses 'neath thy feet—
The stream that flows is full and sweet;
In troubles, virtues grow and shine,
Like pearls beneath the ocean brine.

"Crosses abound: love seeks the skies;
Blow the rough winds, the flames arise;
When hopeless gloom the welkin shrouds,
The sun comes laughing through the clouds;
The cross makes pure affection glow,
Like oil that on the fire we throw.

"Who wears the cross prays oft and well;
*Bruised* herbs send forth the sweetest smell;
Were ships ne'er tossed by stormy winds,
The Pole-star who would care to find?
Had David spent no darksome hours,
His sweetest songs had ne'er been ours.

"From trouble springs the longing hope;
From the deep vale we mount the slope;
Who treads the desert's dreariest way,
For Canaan most will long and pray;
Here finds the trembling dove no rest,
Flies to the ark, and builds his nest."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### JOB, THE PATIENT SUFFERER.

Sin and sorrow are inseparable companions. Ours is a weeping world because it is a sinful world. We cannot pass through it without experiencing affliction, less or more. And those afflictions become to us a blessing or a curse, according to the use we make of them. They must, in the very nature of things, either harden or soften our hearts. We will come out of the furnace either purified like gold, or blackened and hardened by the process through which we have passed. Under the chastening hand of God we will learn to say with David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; "or else we will say in the hardened spirit of Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Some, under the losses and crosses of life, render themselves and all around them miserable, by bitter and unavailing complaints. Others sit down under their trouble with an attempt at stoical indifference, submitting to the lashes of something they call fate. Others, taught by a false philosophy, try to find comfort to themselves and to impart comfort to others by saying, "We must just submit to what can't be helped." None of these are the Christian's methods of finding comfort in trouble. In the story of Job's life we may learn how to bear the loss of friends, health, riches and honors, in a spirit at once rational and pleasing to God.

There are some who would take away Job from the list of Scripture characters altogether. They deny him a real existence, turning the history which we have of him into a parable or allegory; but this finds no warrant in the Bible. Job is mentioned in other parts of the Scriptures, and his name connected with persons who are acknowledged to be real char-

acters. For example, in the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel, Moab, Daniel and Job are spoken of together. Men might as well attempt to make Abraham, Noah, or Daniel, a mere creature of fancy, as Job. The Apostle James makes direct allusion to him in the fifth chapter of his epistle: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful." This is spoken as of a real character; and it seems absurd to think that the Holy Spirit would hold up an imaginary person as an example and model to Christians in all after ages.

There has been a great deal of learned discussion as to the authorship of the Book of Job. The most general opinion is that it was written by Moses during his long and lonely sojourn in Midian. That it is very ancient, is evident from the fact that there is no reference to the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt; nor to the many wonderful events attending their journey to the promised land. Except the book, of Genesis it is, in all probability, the most ancient book in the world. On this subject Gilfillan says: "The book of Job shows a mind smit with a passion for nature in her simplest, most solitary and elementary forms—gazing perpetually at the great shapes of the material universe and reproducing to us the infinite wonder with which the first inhabitants of the world must have seen their first sunrise, their first thunderstorm, their first moon waning; their first midnight heaven expanding like an arch of triumph over their happy heads. One object of the book is to prophecy of nature—to declare its testimony to the Most High—to unite the leaves of its trees, the wings of its fowls, the eyes of its stars, in one act of adoration to Jehovah. August undertaking, and meet for one raised in the desert, anointed with the dew of heaven, and by God himself inspired."

Job is brought before us a man great and distinguished; the greatest of all the men of the East, we are told. There are many kinds of greatness according to the estimate of different persons as to what constitutes it. Some think that the possession of great wealth alone constitutes greatness.

others that distinguished birth and hereditary titles confer greatness; while still others consider genius alone as imparting greatness. Job had a kind of greatness above all these: it was the greatness of true goodness. He was high in rank, according to the idea of his times, being patriarch of his tribe. He had also great wealth, and extensive possessions. That he was a great man intellectually is also clear from the high poetic beauty of his utterances, the power of his imagination and the clear logic of his arguments. But he was great in a better and higher sense; for we are told that he was "perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." Of course, we are not to understand the word perfect here as meaning that he was sinless, for he repeatedly acknowledged himself a sinner. It means that he was perfectly sincere and free from guile. A sinless perfection, so far as the creature is concerned, is not to be found on earth; for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Any claim of that kind, set up by fallen man, can only spring from pride and self-righteousness.

But there is a sense in which every believer is perfect before God—a sense in which he is without sin. He is perfectly justified for Jesus' sake. He is complete in Christ. There is not one sin left unpardoned, not one guilty act left unatoned for, and not one dark spot that the blood of Jesus cannot wash away. So that, in the sense of being perfectly justified from all things, the believer is perfect. Paul brings this out in the tenth chapter of Hebrews: "By one offering Christ has perfected forever them that are sanctified." In this sense Job was perfect. Through the blood of sacrifice he looked away to Calvary and was justified through faith in a Savior to come. There has been but one way of salvation in every age, and that way he knew; for he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

Job comes before us as a highly prosperous man; as one who seems to have all that heart can wish. He lives in a comfortable home, has every necessary within his reach, has power and authority among his fellows, is highly popular among all ranks and conditions of society, being reverenced, as we are

told, "By the young and old, by nobles and by princes." Besides all this, he had grown up around him healthy and loving children; and better than all, and above all, he had the approval of God, filling his soul with a foretaste of heaven.

Now, that he stood firm for God and duty in the midst of all this, speaks highly for the spirituality of his mind. How many in the midst of prosperity forget God. How many in the midst of power become vain and arrogant. How many who, when their bodily wants are all supplied, forget the wants of their immortal souls. Not so with this good man. The tendency of riches is to harden the heart, and to make us forget the sufferings of others. Being successful in all our own undertakings, we are apt to blame those who are not so, as the victims of their own folly. Hence, we are ready to think that poverty and crime are inseparably united.

But Job felt in regard to his wealth, that he was only a steward of his Lord's bounties, an almoner of the blessings of heaven to the poor. And he gave with a kind and loving spirit. He did not, by a haughty and tyrannical manner, hurt the feelings of those whose wants he relieved. He did not wound the spirit while he fed the body. He showed deep sympathy in all his intercourse with the afflicted. His own words are, "Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" In regard to such a man, we rejoice in his prosperity, we are pleased when his riches increase; for his good is the good of all. He gives as he gets, and the more he receives the more blessed are those around him.

Now, when the bolts of adversity suddenly strike such a man, we are taken by surprise. Like thunder rolling out of a clear sky, it startled us by its unexpectedness. And not only so, but we are puzzled and perplexed by such a thing being permitted under the government of a good God. The frequent afflictions of good men, and the temporary prosperity of the wicked, have led to dark and unhappy reflections in the minds of those who felt themselves confronted with this mystery. Among the Jews the idea seemed to have been quite

general, that great afflictions were an evidence of great sins; and this error our Lord frequently rebuked during his ministry upon earth. Job's friends could not but acknowledge that his outward conduct was correct, and therefore, they came to the conclusion that there must have been dark, hidden hypocrisy to account for so much suffering. Even our Lord's disciples, who ought to have known better, pointed to a poor blind man and asked, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he is born blind?" Under the superior light of the gospel we know that afflictions are an evidence of God's love rather than of his displeasure. They are sent to accomplish the very highest good; and are often effectual when all other means have failed. But under a dark dispensation this was not so clearly seen; and the book of Job would be of great service in clearing up this mystery, and vindicating the ways of God to man.

We should remember that this book is thrown into a poetic form, and that the different scenes presented are highly figurative and dramatic. The writer suddenly takes us to the court of heaven, on a day when the ministering angels are assembled before God, giving an account of their missions of love. We are made to see these holy ones standing reverently before Jehovah, when Satan also presents himself. He is asked whence he came, and to his significant answer we should all give heed. "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." This accords with what an inspired writer says of him, that he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The Lord is then represented as speaking in high terms of Job; to which the dark, scowling fiend replied, "Does Job serve God for naught?" This question implied that he considered all Job's piety as selfishness; that he served God, because he was well paid for it; and because constant blessings and favors were showered upon his pathway. Let these only be removed, let his religion cease to *pay*, and instead of worshiping God, Satan insisted that he would curse him to his face.

We have here a most striking illustration of the union of sin

RAHAB CONCEALING THE SPIES.

and selfishness. Satan is the most selfish being in the whole universe, because he is the most sinful. Now, when any being becomes thoroughly selfish he cannot believe in the existence of disinterestedness. Unbelief shuts up the soul in thick darkness, and there is no faith in either God or man. The idea that any one would give anything for nothing, he regards as one only to be laughed at. You need not tell him; he knows better; he knows what human nature is; and is not to be entrapped by fine spun theories of benevolence and disinterestedness.

But the meaning of all this talk about knowing human nature, is simply that he knows a little of his own nature. He knows that *he* would not give something for nothing. He knows that there is no disinterestedness about him; and as water cannot rise above its own level, in his conception of others he cannot rise higher than himself. Let a minister show great zeal for the salvation of souls, and sinners will tell you that he does it to increase the membership of his church, and consequently to add to his own salary. I know a minister who, feeling deeply for perishing souls, went out into the streets, hoping to save some who never go to the house of God. An editor published in his paper that this was done to fill up his church and increase his pay; when the fact was, that at that very time his church was crowded to the door, every pew rented, and more constantly being asked for. In a city where I resided several of the lady members of the church went out into the lowest haunts of poverty and crime, carrying food and clothing to the starving wretches that pined and shivered in these filthy dens. These poor creatures would often ask the ladies what salary they got for doing this; finding it impossible to believe that any one would go through all this toil and exposure and danger for nothing. When told that it was all done from love to Jesus, and love to them as his creatures, they stared in absolute astonishment. Some shook their heads and looked incredulous. There was no room in their selfish souls for such a grand conception. Like their master, the Devil, they had no faith.

Take another illustration. The young people connected with my church commenced a mission school in one of the most wicked parts of the city. It did, indeed, seem a forlorn hope to attempt doing any good there. The young people, however, were full of the love of Christ, and of love to souls, and went from house to house inviting the children in. At the appointed hour there was a good attendance. I noticed two little boys, dirty and ragged, enter, and casting a suspicious look around them, take a seat near the door. One of them laid his hat upon the end of a bench. It was dirty, greasy, and torn, and certainly not worth a cent; but no sooner had he laid it down than his companion, giving him a dig in his ribs with his elbow, exclaimed, "Bill, pick up your hat; *they'll hook it.*" Poor child! he had lived in such scenes of crime and selfishness, had been so accustomed to hatred and suspicion, that he firmly believed that we had been to all that pains of furnishing a school-house and inviting him in, only to *hook his old hat.*

The more men are like Satan, that is, the more wicked they are, the harder it is to get them to believe in God's disinterested love. Even when conscience lashes them into an attempt to come back to their Maker, their first thought is that they must pay something for their pardon. They bring, in some way, a price in their hand. This is the reason that those forms of religion that permit the sinner to pay something for his salvation are so popular. The good news of the gospel, that God pardons freely, without money and without price, they find it hard to receive. There seems no room in their minds for such a glorious view of God, they are so filled and narrowed up with sin and selfishness.

We learn from the history of Job that Satan has no independent power to injure God's people. He could do nothing without permission, and all that he did do was overruled for the increase of the faith and purity of him whom he attacked. With all his boasted knowledge of human nature, he was completely defeated. His cunning devices were all foiled. The reason is, that the same Lord that permitted Job to be tried

sustained him by his mighty power in the trial. If the powers of darkness were permitted to sift Peter, the Great Advocate was praying for him at the same time, that his faith might not fail.

The blow has at last fallen, and that, too, at a time when it would be felt most severely, on one of the joyful days of his life. There was a family festival at the house of his oldest son. They were a cheerful, happy, united family; joy beamed in every face and flashed from every eye. No unhappy jealousies no unlovely bickerings, disturbed the harmony of the occasion. It was a sight to gladden a father's heart, and even to arrest the pleased attention of a passing angel. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

There are some things that are pleasant, but not good; there are others, again, that are good but not pleasant; but this was both pleasant and good. Job is not with his children on this occasion, but he rejoiced in their joy, and sent to heaven many a prayer that their earthly prosperity might not lead them to forget God.

But what means this! A man is seen rushing towards the house, and his face tells a tale of woe before his tongue can utter a word. His clothes are torn and bloody, and he has all the appearance of one who has passed through a severe conflict. He reports to his master that while he and his fellow servants were at work in the fields, a band of Sabeans fell upon them, killed all but himself, and went off with the cattle. It has often been noticed in families, that one trouble scarcely ever comes alone. Rushing after each other like the great waves of the stormy sea, they come down upon the heads of the sufferers with surging might. Scarcely has this man finished telling his tale of woe, when another comes in hot haste, breathless, pale, and a whole volume of evil tidings in his eye. He reports that the lightnings of heaven had fallen in consuming blaze, and killed all Job's servants and the vast flocks of sheep which they had been attending. He had scarcely done speaking when another reporter of evil tidings entered. He reports that the Chaldeans, in three bands, have seized upon the camels, and

taken them away, killing the servants while defending their master's property. But heavier and heavier fall the blows upon this good man's head. His property is nearly all gone; he is now a poor man; but his children are yet spared to him. They have always been kind and loving and dutiful, and he is still rich in possessing them. But here comes another messenger with words of horror! A wild tempest, a desolating tornado has smote the house where his children had their family gathering, and crushed them to death in its ruin. Oh, what a crushing blow is this! The loss of riches could have been borne, but his brave, his lovely, his loving children—the joy of his life, the beloved of his soul—all gone; never to see them more, never again to gladden his heart and his home with their beaming smiles and loving ways!

Who that have lost children themselves do not pity this old man, standing in this howling tempest of adversity, like a solitary tree in a field, stripped of all its branches. I remember meeting a brother minister in Canada, who when he left Scotland had a large family of lovely children; but when he landed at Montreal had not one. They had sickened and died, one after another, till all had been committed to the great deep. He looked like a man who had been stunned with a blow on the head. He walked and talked like a man in a dream. But Job's children were not taken from him by disease, giving him a little time to prepare for the appalling loss: but suddenly, without a moment's notice, he was written childless. And then, it was by a violent death that he lost them. No doubt, to the Christian sudden death is sudden glory; but it fills us with horror to have the bodies of our friends mangled by sudden death, it may be almost beyond recognition. Let us learn from this dark catalogue of trouble which befell Job, to keep a loose hold of earth, and not to set our affections too strongly upon anything below the skies, for we know not what a day may bring forth. A few brief hours may sweep our possessions from the face of the earth. Let us have our treasure in heaven, our all in God himself.

Meantime, how bears this good man this succession of

troubles? In such a way as to excite our highest admiration. He does not throw himself upon the ground in an agony of turbulent and frenzied sorrow. He does not rush off into the wilderness, nor hide himself in a hermit's cave, there to brood over his losses. It is true that he feels those losses keenly, but his sorrow is manly and dignified. There is no extravagant expression of his sorrow, either in word or act. His faith gains a complete victory, compared with which all the victories ever gained on battle fields sink into insignificance. By that faith he conquered Satan, and set an example that has been like a tower of strength to believers in every age since his day. Listen to the sublime outpourings of his anguished soul. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But his afflictions are not yet ended. Fierce disease fastens upon his own person. He is smitten with sore boils, from the sole of his feet unto his crown. Eminent scholars and physicians, judging from the symptoms described, say that it was the black leprosy with which he was afflicted. This is described as a universal ulcer, and one of the most painful and loathsome diseases which can afflict humanity. He is brought before us in a most forlorn and miserable condition; sitting among ashes and scraping himself with a potsherd. We are told that the disease named is so offensive that all the friends flee from the sufferer, leaving him to be his own nurse. The whole is such a dark picture of sorrow and desolation that our hearts break out in pity, and we would be glad if death would step in and end the scene. His own picture of his state is this: "When I lie down I say, when shall I arise, and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with wounds and clouds of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome."

At this crisis we hear, for the first time, of his wife. We are glad to learn that she still lives; and are ready to assure ourselves that she will bring him comfort. No man can be utterly desolate and forsaken who has the strong affection and undy-

ing love of a good wife to fall back upon. Heaven's richest gift to man is a wise, loving, true-hearted wife. She will prove to him a helpmeet in every trial; and her sympathy, her strong faith in her husband, and her hope in the future will prove an unfailing support. But, alas! even this fails Job in the day of trouble. We would not wonder to find his wife the victim of bitter grief and sunk under a load of despondency. Many of the calamities that had befallen him had smitten her also. The children that he had lost were also her children. If he was homeless and beggared by the loss of his earthly all, she was an equal sharer in the loss. We are prepared to excuse her, then, for any outbreak of passionate sorrow to which she may give vent. But when we see her approach him with the harsh, unwomanly, and blasphemous words, "Curse God and die'" we are shocked, and feel that this is a heavy addition to his troubles. His property is gone, his children are gone, his health gone, his high position in society gone, even his friends are turned against him and are denouncing him as a hypocrite; and now he has nothing left but his God and his religion, and even his own wife asks him to renounce these. To curse his God, and to tear from his agonized soul the hope of heaven, is the counsel which Satan gives; not through his own foul, lying lips, but through the lips of her he had loved so long and so well. His answer, under the circumstances, is one of great mildness and wisdom. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

The Apostle Paul tells us that "no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but rather grievous." He then points us out the results which affliction works, such as the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The bud may be bitter, but the flower will be sweet.

A minister tells us that he was spending several days in one of our Western cities. He put up at a hotel, and one morning he heard, while up in his room, the most wonderful whistling he had ever listened to. It seemed like the notes of a

bird, but he thought it could not be that, for there was a perfectly regular tune kept up with much power. Though he was in the third story, yet the music came gushing up in its sweet melody, and seemed to fill the whole house. He ran down stairs to get a sight of the wonderful performer, looking every man that he met in the face. At last he asked the clerk who it was that had such amazing power as a whistler. Laughing at his simplicity he pointed him to a canary bird that had been trained to perform in this way, and was valued at one hundred and fifty dollars.

"How was that bird trained to sing this way?" the gentleman enquired. In reply the clerk told him that during the training process the bird is nearly starved and shut up in a room that is almost dark. While it is under this severe discipline, and its attention undivided, a bird organ is made to play this one tune over and over again, for days. Hearing nothing else, and *taught by his troubles*, the poor little bird takes up the tune which he performs so perfectly.

Thus it is that God permits his people to be afflicted that they may learn the heavenly song. He shuts them up in the dark room of sorrow, away from the tempting sights and sounds of the world, that they may, without distraction, listen to his voice and learn to sing the higher melodies of glory. Blessed are those who patiently wait the Lord's good time to work out their deliverance. When the song of grace is fully learned, he brings them into a large place, sets their feet upon a rock, and others learn from them the sweet song of redeeming love.

There was lately on exhibition, in New York, a beautiful work of art, a drawing so perfect, that in the opinion of the best judges, it deserved to be put beside the works of the great masters. It tells a story of patience and perseverance, of courage and self-reliance, and of the power of the mind over outward difficulties, truly amazing.

The drawing is by John Carter, and it was executed in India ink, with the point of a hair pencil which he held between his teeth. He has executed a number of pieces, all of which have been eagerly bought up, but the one referred to is said to be

his masterpiece, and is called "*The Rat Catcher and his Dogs.*" Carter was a poor, uneducated, common day laborer, having only been long enough at school to learn to read and write. One day in climbing a tree he fell and injured his spine. He was taken up for dead; but, contrary to all expectation, lived for fourteen years without power to move a limb of his body, and without feeling anywhere below his neck. His head and neck had feeling and power of motion. To pass the time he began to draw, holding the brush in his teeth and moving it with his lips and tongue. A beautiful butterfly came in at his window one day, and he took that for his first subject. He went on day by day, forgetting his troubles in his intense interest in his occupation, till he produced a picture that excites the admiration of the best judges in Britain and America.

Nor was this all. He died in 1850, and a short memoir of him was written by his minister, from which we learn that his moral qualities kept pace with his intellectual. While he was learning to draw the works of God the Holy Spirit was drawing the Divine image upon his soul. His poor, hard, repulsive life was made lovely and of good report, and the humble cottage in which he lived became to many like the gate of heaven. A sweet calm, unbroken by fretfulness or repining, sat upon his soul day by day, and made a visit to him the most powerful of sermons. And while he showed such energy, ingenuity, and invincible pluck in overcoming difficulties, yet in humility and gratitude and cheerful piety, he showed that his trust was in God alone.

So it is that thousands in the school of affliction have learned that of which they had no conception in prosperous days. They have in quiet patience possessed their souls till the Savior's image could be seen in them. Could we to-day go up to that heavenly multitude, in numbers beyond computation, and speak to them one by one, we would find that they had come there through *much* tribulation. And now they know that it was not too much—that not one trial, not one stroke of the rod could have been spared.

"All their toils and conflicts over,
Lo! they dwell with Christ above;
Oh! what glories they discover
In the Savior whom they love!
Now they see him face to face,
Him who saved them by His grace."

But to return to Job. Three of his special friends paid him a visit of sympathy and condolence. He was so fearfully changed that they could scarcely recognize him, and contrasting his present condition with that in which they had last seen him, "they lifted up their voices and wept." With much delicacy of feeling they sat down by him upon the ground without uttering a word; paying, as the poet says:

"A debt of reverence to distress so great."

We have an account of a long discussion between Job and his friends, into which we have not room fully to enter. To do so would require a book by itself. Job still retains his faith in God, but through weakness of the flesh, and his extreme mental and bodily anguish, he gives utterance to sentiments that cannot be justified. There are lamentations of too desponding a character; and he shows too much self-righteousness in vindicating himself. Eliphaz, being the oldest of the three, is the first speaker. His arguments are powerful, and his language has great poetic beauty and eloquence. But his whole address is founded upon the false conception that Job's great sufferings are a proof that he was a great sinner.

In the course of his remarks he has a splendid description of a supernatural visitor, which has been greatly admired by men of literary taste. Many attempts have been made to describe in poetic numbers the visits of spirits to earth; but their description remains unapproached and unapproachable. Barnes says of it, "It is impossible to conceive anything more sublime than the whole description. It was midnight. There was silence and solitude all around. At that fearful hour the vision came, and a sentiment was communicated to Eliphaz of the utmost importance, and suited to make the deepest possible impression. The time, the quiet, the form of the image, its

passing along, and then suddenly standing still; the silence, and then the deep and solemn voice—all were fitted to produce the profoundest awe."

Bildad, the Shuhite, is the next speaker. There is a great deal of good sound truth in his remarks; but going upon the ground that Job must have been a hypocrite, it sounds harsh, severe, and cruel.

Zophar is the third of those miserable comforters. He takes the same ground as the rest, as to the cause of Job's affliction, and is even more violent and denunciatory against the man of God. There is in his discourse one of the grandest descriptions of God's attributes. He dwells upon the sovereignty of God and the unsearchableness of his ways; and argues from the perfection of the Divine wisdom the folly of sinful man setting himself up to question God's ways.

While the controversy was going on a young man, called Elihu, had been an earnest listener, and now in a very modest way began to give his opinions. He rebukes both sides; Job for justifying himself rather than the Lord, who doeth righteously, and his friends for condemning, without cause, so good a man. With wonderful power he shows the impossibility of sinful man making himself acceptable to God by his own works. And his speech had a great effect upon Job. He makes no direct reply to it, but his eyes become open to his faults, and to a humble view of himself before God. Toward the close of his remarks there is a very sublime description of a thunder storm. Nowhere can we find, in the writings of uninspired men, anything to be compared to it. In the eighteenth Psalm there is a description of the same thing, that perhaps excels it. It is likely that such a storm was raging at the very time Elihu was speaking; for shortly after we are told of the Lord speaking to Job out of the whirlwind.

This speech of the Almighty is awfully solemn and sublime. Bishop Patrick says, "that its grandeur is as much above all other poetry as thunder is louder than a whisper." Gilfillan, who regards the book of Job as an allegory, says, "To put suitable language in the mouth of Deity, has generally tasked

to straining or crushed to feebleness the genius of poets." Homer, indeed, at times, nobly ventriloquizes from the top of Olympus; but it is ventriloquism; Homer's thunder, not Job's. Milton, while impersonating God, falls flat; he peeps and mutters from the dust; he shrinks from seeking to fill up the compass of the Eternal's voice. Adequately to represent God's speaking, required not only the highest inspiration, but that the poet had heard, or thought that he heard, his very voice, shaping articulate sounds from midnight torrents, from the voices of the wind, from the chambers of thunder, from the rush of whirlwinds, from the hush of night, and from the breeze of day. And doubtless, the author of the book of Job had this experience."

Job is now humbled in the dust. He takes his true position as a sinner. He says to God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes see thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The Lord from the whirlwind rebukes the three friends in words of strong displeasure. They had given a distorted view of God's character, and had persistently slandered a good man. They were commanded to bring an expiatory sacrifice for themselves, while Job is to intercede on their behalf. Prosperity now rolls in upon Job. Two-fold more than he had lost is restored to him. Friends crowd around him with presents in their hands, and in a happy and serene old age he found that the promises of God never fail the trusting and confiding believer. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"Leave all to God,
Forsaken one, and still thy tears,
For the Highest knows thy pain;
Sees thy suffering and thy fears;
Thou shalt not wait his help in vain,
Leave all to God.

"Be still and trust!
For his strokes are strokes of love
Thou must for thy profit bear;
He thy filial fear would move;
Trust thy Father's loving care:
Be still and trust!

"Know God is near!
Though thou think him far away,
Though his mercy long have slept,
He will come and not delay,
When his child enough hath wept;
For God is near.

"O, teach him not
When and how to hear thy prayers;
Never doth our God forget;
He the cross who longest bears
Finds his sorrow's bounds are set;
Then teach him not.

"If thou love him,
Walking truly in his ways,
Then no trouble, cross, or death
Shakes thy heart or quells thy praise;
All things serve thee here beneath,
If thou love God!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SAMUEL: THE CONSECRATED TO GOD.

How much the world owes to pious mothers can never be known. The men who have done the most to bring our wandering race back to God; who have stood forth the bold and unflinching advocates of civil and religious liberty; in whose souls have burned a patriotic fervor that eagerly and earnestly aimed at the highest good of their countrymen for both world's; men who made no account of life itself when put in competition with the glory of God and the high and holy interests of truth; men, in short, who in the presence of assembled worlds shall hear the "well done" of the great Judge addressed to them, have been delighted to acknowledge that all that they were, under God, was due to the prayers and instructions of their pious mothers.

It has been noticed that among the women of Israel, there existed a strong desire for children. To be a wife and not a mother was regarded as a heavy affliction; nay, a kind of reproach. This has been accounted for by the influence which the promise of the Messiah had upon their minds, each hoping that the high honor which in the fullness of time was given to the Holy Mary might be hers. But this only accounts for it in part. They regarded the possession of children as a great blessing, "a heritage from the Lord;" and an increase of the family was a matter of rejoicing and gratitude. And permit me to say, that this is always the case, where society is not sunk into a fearfully perverted and corrupted state. Woe to the country where children are regarded rather as an incumbrance than as a blessing, as something to be feared rather than desired, and to prevent which means are resorted to, at the very thought of which modesty blushes and humanity shudders.

This strong desire for children gave rise to a practice, which, not only never had the approval of God, but incurred his highest displeasure. I refer to the practice of introducing into the household, another or a subordinate wife, when the first had no children. The family distractions, the jealousies, and heart-burnings, the utter loss of all home comfort, to which this almost universally gave rise, proved that the way of transgressors is hard.

The father of Samuel was Elkanah, a Levite, of the city of Ephraim. He was a person of wealth and influence, and seems to have been a kind, good, God-fearing man. His wife, Hannah, was one of the best of women. Her piety was deep and earnest, and marked by great humility and conscientiousness, while her faith in prayer was extraordinary. Her husband loved her fondly, but their home was not gladened by the voice of childhood, which was a standing sorrow to her heart. In an evil hour her husband brought another wife to his house, named Penannah, and all comfort fled the dwelling. She brought Elkanah sons and daughters, we are told; but being a woman of a weak and malignant mind, she made Hannah very unhappy by her constant abuse.

But that good woman was as eminent for her goodness as for her piety, and patiently bore evils which could not be helped. She made no complaint to her husband, and entered into no angry altercations with her foolish and cruel rival. Her meek and gentle spirit was far above anything of that kind, and led her to carry all her heart troubles to Him who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee."

Her husband went up yearly to the tabernacle of the Lord in Shiloh, to offer sacrifices, taking his family with him. It would seem that on such occasions Hannah's rival was at special pains to insult her and to triumph over her. Her poor, trembling, timid soul, flies to the sanctuary, and pours out her troubles into the loving and sympathizing ear of her heavenly Friend.

There is nothing on earth so powerful as prayer. More powerful than the might of kings, the decrees of cabinets, or

the mandates of senators, is the prayer of faith. More to be feared, by the enemies of truth and righteousness, is the appeal to heaven, by the humblest child of God, than the tramp of armies, and the might of well appointed navies, for prayer can do what these cannot, move the arm of God. Hannah's prayer was a powerful and an effective one, but it was not a noisy one. There were deep groanings within her that could not be uttered. Her lips moved, but her voice was only heard by the ear of God. Very likely there was the marks of deep emotion upon her countenance; and Eli, the High priest, who had been watching her, came to the conclusion that she was intoxicated, and administered to her a severe rebuke, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee."

Poor woman! As if she had not trouble enough already, must she be called a drunkard in God's house and by God's minister! How hard and stunning must this blow have been to such a gentle and sensitive spirit. The best of men are liable to make mistakes in judging of their fellow-creatures, but how cautious should we be in forming our opinions about others, and still more so in expressing them. We may offend one of God's little ones, and bring upon ourselves a terrible woe. What does Hannah do? Does she break out into indignant protest and angry invective against such a charge? No; she treats God's high priest with becoming reverence and courtesy. "No, my Lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drank neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord."

The good man was convinced that he had made a serious mistake, and joined his prayers to her's. She made a vow, that if the Lord would give her a son he should be wholly devoted to the Lord's service. In due time her prayer was answered, and as she gazed upon the face of her son with all a mother's fond love, she called him Samuel, which means, asked of the Lord.

Soon as Samuel was old enough to be spared from his mother, she is not unmindful of her solemn vow. From the Lord's

hands she had received him, and to His service she is resolved he shall be dedicated. To part with him, at a time when he was becoming most interesting, must have been a hard trial to her motherly heart, but faith can triumph even over natural affection. We see her then holding her boy by the hand and journeying to Shiloh. Perhaps Eli had forgotten her by this time, but a few words would soon recall all the circumstances of the case. He takes the gift from the mother, recognizing the hand of God in the whole matter; and from that time, we are told, the child ministered to him.

And now she must go back to her home without him who, as far as any earthly thing could, had been the joy and light of her dwelling. We expect to hear the voice of weeping and lamentation, but instead of that, she breaks forth into a song of thanksgiving, and the outgushing of a happy, loving heart. But though she has parted with her son and knows that he is in safe keeping, she still watches over him, and cares for his wants. What a sweet picture is that which the inspired narrator brings before us. "She made him a little coat, and brought it from year to year, when she came with her husband to the yearly sacrifice." How these yearly visits would be looked forward to, how they would be talked about before and after, we need not tell. It has not been thought beneath the dignity of inspired history to mention that little coat, every stitch of which was a labor of love. God gave her other children, who made many demands upon her time; but her oldest son, the child of her many prayers, was never forgotten. She saw him growing up in favor with God and man. He was humble, prompt in the performance of his duties, reverent and earnest in all that related to God's worship, greatly beloved by the high priest, and gave promise of future greatness even beyond a fond mother's expectations.

What a great work does that mother accomplish who trains up a child for God. Her sphere may seem a small one, her lot lowly and obscure; but world-wide is the influence she exerts. Her work will go down undiminished, and extending through all ages; even down to the last moment of recorded

"SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH."

time. And yet it is not every good Christian that is a good trainer of youth. Some, by sour and gloomy presentation of truth, may make religion repulsive to their children. Some, by too great severity, break the twig instead of bending it in a heavenly direction; while others, like Eli, refusing to use the appropriate restraints, let them rush on, with unbridled passions, to perdition.

We cannot estimate the great influence of youthful piety. Then impressions are received that are to be perpetual as the soul's own being. It is then that the die is struck, the inscription impressed, that is to be read through all eternity. Then is the crisis of our being—the moulding time of character—that is to develop into an an angel or a fiend. We sometimes, in traveling, meet old men mature in wickedness; lost to faith in God, lost to faith in man's truth or woman's virtue; the wretched, depraved, sensual soul, having engraved its likeness upon the wrinkled visage; the filthy mouth forming an outlet for the vile, volcanic-like passions that dwell within; and we are shocked at the sight. But all this maturity in sin began in one false step in youth. We are shocked to read in the papers accounts of wrecked ships, beaten to pieces by angry waves upon frowning cliffs and rocky coasts. In the quiet and security of our own homes, we can imagine that we hear the shrieks of the perishing ones, rising above the hoarse voice of the tempest; and that we see faces distorted with terror, as they are borne on to destruction by the mountain billow. But what is this to the wrecks that are going on among young souls, every day, in our crowded cities. With strong passions within, clamoring for gratification; with temptations all around, making them more familiar with sin, they are among the breakers; and nothing but early piety, taking Jesus for their pilot, can save them. He alone can guide them to a secure haven.

Samuel was consecrated to God. An old man may do this, but he only offers God the dregs of his life. His health, his vigor, his bright manhood, his warm, glowing affections, have all been given to the world. To deliberately plan to put reli-

gion off to old age, is supremely mean, not to speak of its wickedness. It is a positive insult to God; for he gave the world the very best gift he had to give, namely, his own Son. And yet men will tell us that when they are old and worn out in sin and worldliness, they will come with a sudden flaring out of piety, and make God a present of the dregs of their existence.

Can we conceive of anything more forlorn and sad than an old man sitting amid the wrecks of the past, with dull ears, and dim eyes, and benumbed brain, looking over a misspent life, while his sins, gathering round him, call for vengeance, like the ghosts of murdered men. He wants to go to heaven; not that he cares about its employments or its holiness, but only to escape hell. The habit of delaying religion has become so strong that it binds him as if with chains of iron; and dozing his days away in a sleepy indifference he passes into eternity. Young reader, come early to Jesus. Let the first fruits of your whole being be given to him. The most useful men the world has ever seen were converted early. Samuel, David, Daniel and Timothy are all examples of this. And may God make you another illustrious example of the same thing!

Samuel was not only early called to be a subject of real piety, but he was early called into the prophetic office. This was done in a remarkable manner. Waiting upon the high priest, and performing many little offices for his personal comfort, he slept at night near to his chamber. The old man had gone to rest; and, his duties being all performed, Samuel had retired also. It was the silent hour of midnight; the Levites were all asleep; the lights had begun to grow dim in the sanctuary, when Samuel is aroused by a voice calling his name. He goes at once to the room of the high priest, saying, "Here am I." Three times he was called, and thrice he responded in like manner. On none of those occasions had Eli called him, but the aged servant of God, suspecting that there was something supernatural in the voice, instructed the youth next time he was called to reply, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant

heareth." This he did, and the Lord answered by revealing to him the fearful judgment he was about to bring upon Eli and his family, on account of the wicked and sacrilegious conduct of his sons.

Samuel was now in a difficult position. Eli had ever been a kind and loving friend to him; and he felt great diffidence in communicating the awful revelation entrusted to him. He felt that the burden of the Lord was upon him; but went about his common every day duties as before. Eli, however, suspected that he had received some communication that he wished to keep back; and solemnly charged him to tell him all the truth. This the young lad did, and when the venerable man heard the appalling sentence he meekly replied: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth good in his sight."

The threatened judgment did not tarry long. Eli was a good, pure, kind-hearted man; as is seen in all his dealings with Hannah and her son. But he had no force of character; he was timid, and destitute of moral courage. His sons, who served with him in the sanctuary, were vile men, profaning by their conduct the house of God. This he knew, and no doubt mourned over the fact; but he loved peace more than purity, and let matters go on till his sons brought a reproach and a disgrace upon the cause of God. The great God is now about to take the matter into his own hands; and Eli has not a word to say, but acknowledges his coming punishment right and just. That the rebukes of the Almighty should fall upon him, is only what he feels that he deserves. Some men would have shown resentment against Samuel, as the messenger of those sad tidings; but he loves the youth as much as ever, and only condemns himself.

A war breaks out between the Philistines and the Israelites. According to custom the people of Israel take the ark with them—the symbol of Divine presence. The possession of that sacred object used to put fresh courage into their armies and strike terror into the hearts of their foes. But now an alarming disaster befalls them. They flee before their enemies; Eli's sons are both killed; the ark is taken, and the high priest

dies under the blow inflicted upon him by the sad tidings! It is, indeed, a most affecting picture, to see that old man sitting, watching and waiting for tidings from the battle field. We are told that his heart trembled for the ark of God. At last he hears the noise of the tumult of people; one comes running out of the army, his clothes torn and earth upon his head, and tells Eli a tale of horror. His sons are dead—great slaughter among the people—Israel fleeing like frightened sheep before their foes; and, worst of all, the ark of God taken! Ah! this was more than he could bear. We see him stretch out his trembling and palsied hands; the ghastly hue of death comes over his face; and, in the touching language of the inspired narrative, "He fell from off the seat backward, by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy."

This whole narrative reads a most impressive lesson to parents and guardians of youth. If we have a restraining power and fail to exercise it, so that evil goes on, having too little moral courage, or too indolent or selfish a desire for peace, we are held accountable for the evil that occurs. We are held to account for evil that we could have prevented in others and did not, as much as for evil that we directly do ourselves. Eli should have restrained his sons, by meekness and gentleness if he could, but by the most harsh and most severe measures, if nothing else would avail. God should have been honored first and above all; if the nearest and the dearest had been turned out beggar upon the world. Here we see how one defect of character may destroy the usefulness of a good man. This man was gentle, loving, kind; took a deep interest in the prosperity of God's cause; had great power in prayer; and meekly bore the rebukes of the Lord. But he had no firmness, and this made his whole character like a rope of sand; so that no dependence could be put in him. We must add to our faith, courage; that is, the power to say no, at the right time and at the right place.

Sin is no trifle. God does not spare it even in his own dear people. And if this is the case with them, oh sinner! what

will become of you? "If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Samuel was now the one to whom the eyes of the people turned. They had been long familiar with his wonderful history, and recent events had pointed him out as a chosen prophet of the Lord. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." He found the nation of Israel in a fearfully corrupt state. The sons of Eli had brought the public worship of God into disrepute, and idol worship began to reappear and to become popular. The young prophet showed great zeal for the right; his voice was lifted up against the abominations around him; and the trumpet of truth, as sounded by him, gave no uncertain sound.

After Samuel was formally recognized as Judge his first act was to call an assembly of the people, for fasting and prayer and deep humiliation before the Lord. He urged the entire extirpation of idolatry; and promised the people that if this was done the Lord would return to them and deliver them from the oppression of the Philistines. Their enemy, hearing of this great meeting, and judging that it boded them no good, came up in battle array against them. For this they were not prepared, and great fear took hold of them. But one thing was favorable. They had learned to know where their strength lay, and said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us." God heard prayer, their enemies were driven before them, and in grateful memory of the event, Samuel set up a stone, calling it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Every Christian that has carefully noted the ways of the Lord with him, can raise up many a joyful Ebenezer. It is a sad sign of our ingratitude that we are loud in our cries for help, when in trouble, but not so loud in our shouts of praise when deliverance comes. Our adorable Lord said: "Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?" Only one had come back to give thanks for his cure. To remember past mercies, and draw from them occasion of thanksgiving and of

encouragement for the future, is well pleasing to God. When prayer has been answered, and faith has gained a victory, we should not permit unbelief to come in with the false insinuation, that perhaps it was going to happen as it did, at any rate. But let us promptly raise our Ebenezers, leaving them all the way behind us as monuments of God's goodness and our thankfulness. Thus the righteous shall hear of it and be glad; and many, led by our example, shall extol the God of their salvation. If we could realize that we receive no good of any kind that we have deserved, that all has been of grace, from beginning to end, how would thanksgivings break forth from our hearts, and shine forth in every act of our lives!

So far we have marked in Samuel one prominent point of character, that is, he aimed directly at God's glory in all that he did. We do not see him seeking ease, nor emoluments, nor honors; his grand aim was to honor God. This is a vital point in true Godliness; and leads to works of faith and labors of love. Those who have it are always found zealous workers, and that, too, from right motives. Let the following fact illustrate this. A dear boy, a Sabbath school scholar, was dying. His teacher visited him, and found one of his classmates just leaving the chamber as he entered it. It was the only one of the class who did not love Jesus, and the dying youth had been urging him to come to the Savior.

The teacher said, "Oh, I do so want to see H—— a Christian, and then our band will be complete, it will be such a joy to think we shall all meet in heaven."

"Yes it will," said Arthur, his eyes kindling at the thought, "but that is not the best reason, teacher, is it?"

"What is the best reason, Arthur?" I asked. "Why," said he, "Jesus will be so glad, because, you know, that was what he died for."

Soon after this dear youth was taken away, but his words should be remembered; for they teach us that the highest reason for our zeal in God's service, is not our own happi ess, nor even the happiness of others, but the glory of God.

A soul, then, in earnest will speak to sinners in such a way that

they *must* hear him. His whole heart will be in his words. Dr. Ide has a good illustration of this, which I present to the reader.

"A traveler was journeying in the darkness of night along a road that led to a deep and rapid river, which, swollen by sudden rains, was chafing and roaring within its precipitous banks. The bridge that crossed the stream had been swept away by the torrent, but he knew it not. A man met him, and, after inquiring whither he was bound, said to him in an indifferent way—

"Are you aware that the bridge is gone?" "No," was the answer, "why do you think so?" "Oh, I heard such a report this afternoon, and though I am not certain about it, you had better, perhaps, not proceed.'

Deceived by the hesitating and undecided manner in which the information was given, the traveler pushed onward in the way of death. Soon another, meeting him, cried out in consternation—"Sir, sir, the bridge is gone!"

"Oh, yes," replied the wayfarer, "some one told me that story a little distance back; but from the careless tone with which he told it, I am sure it is only an idle tale."

"Oh, it is true, it is true!" exclaimed the other. 'I know the bridge is gone, for I barely escaped being carried away with it myself. Danger is before you, and you must not go on." And, in the excitement of his feelings, he grasped him by the hands, by the arms, by the clothes, and besought him not to rush upon manifest destruction.

Convinced by the earnest voice, the earnest eyes, the earnest gestures, the traveler turned back and was saved. The intelligence in both cases was the same; but the manner of its conveyance in the one gave it an air of fable, in the other an air of truth.

So it is only through a burning zeal for the salvation of the lost—a zeal glowing in the heart, and flashing out in the look, and action, and utterance—that the confidence of unbelief can be overcome, and the heedless travelers of the broad way come to the path of life and happiness. Love is the most potent logic; interest and sympathy are the most subduing eloquence.

An earnest desire for the honor of God will overcome covetousness, and make men liberal in giving to the cause of truth. A minister tells us of a case in point. "Many years ago, happening to be in South Wales, I made the acquaintance of a Welsh gentleman. He was then a landed proprietor, living in his own mansion, and in very comfortable circumstances. He had been before carrying on an extensive business in a large town. By the death of a relative he had unexpectedly come into possession of this property. After considering whether he should retire from business, he made up his mind he should still continue to carry it on, though no longer for himself, but for Christ. I could not help being struck with the gleesomeness of a holy mind which lighted up his countenance when he said: 'I never knew before what real happiness was. Formerly, I sought as a master to earn a livelihood for myself, but now I am carrying on the same work as diligently as if for myself, and even more so, but it is now for Christ, and every half-penny of profit is handed over to the treasury of the Lord, and I feel that the smile of the Savior rests upon me.'"

Samuel is growing old. His two sons, whom he had called to his assistance as Judges, did not show the incorruptible integrity of their father. One day, to his great surprise, the elders of Israel came to him at Ramah, and desired that a king should be appointed over them. This request was not made from a sudden impulse, but seems to have been the result of long deliberation and consultation. They proceed with great delicacy in breaking the matter to the prophet; and were careful to let him understand that they had no fault to find with his administration. This request was not at all pleasing to Samuel. He seems to have felt it, to some extent, as a personal reflection upon himself. And yet though he thus felt, he says nothing till he could lay the whole matter before the Lord. Oh that all God's servants would act thus wisely! One angry word, one bitter taunt, at this time, might have done great mischief. Blessed are the people who carry their troubles and their cares to the Lord.

RUTH GLEANING IN THE FIELD.

The answer that Samuel received was, to let the people have such a government as they chose, but to warn them that they would involve themselves in trouble and in a very bitter experience. The Lord, in a measure, rebuked the personal feeling which the prophet had upon the subject, by saying, "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me." In the days of their highest prosperity they professed to take Jehovah as their king; but now they are disposed to turn to an arm of flesh. God's words are, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm;" and the Israelites felt the truth of this in all its force. Hosea tells us that "the Lord gave them a king in His wrath." They wanted to be like the nations around them, forgetting that if they got all the glitter, and pomp, and parade of majesty, they were very likely to get all its despotic and tyrannical abuse also. Heretofore they had been under a very mild rule, but unlimited power has a tendency to make an oppressor of even a good man. Such power is only fit for God himself; he alone makes a good use of it.

It had been foretold, that a line of kings would rise in Israel. It was part of the promise to Abraham, that kings should spring from him, and Jacob had predicted that the scepter should not depart from Judah till Shiloh came. But, though God foreknows what is going to occur, and may foretell it, this does not imply that he approves it. Samuel drew a very graphic picture of what they might expect under the reign of a king, and the oppressions to which they were likely to be subjected. This was not favorably received, for the people replied, "Nay, but we will have a king over us, that he may judge us, and go out before us to battle." The prophet felt that he could do no more to dissuade them from their purpose, and sorrowfully proceeded to make the necessary arrangements for the great governmental change.

With the utmost fairness Samuel proceeded to the nomination of the king, so that no one could accuse him of favoritism. At Mizpeh, the assembled tribes made their choice by lot. Saul, the son of Kish, was the individual pointed out. It would seem that he had no ambition in that direction; was

afraid to encounter the great responsibility of such a position, and would have prefered to remain in the humble and obscure condition in which he was born. Accordingly he had withdrawn himself from notice, being hid among the baggage. Perhaps he thought that if not found, they would go on and elect another; but he was soon discovered and brought before the people. All eyes were turned upon him with pride, for he had a tall, noble form that towered up above the crowd, and a majestic presence. He was saluted with a shout of admiration.

This being the beginning of a constitutional monarchy, Samuel took great care to secure the liberties of the people. He not only addressed them upon the subject, but committed the whole matter to writing, which document, we are told, was laid up before the Lord.

Samuel now felt that his work was nearly done, and he took the opportunity of a great gathering of the people at Gilgal to deliver his farewell address. There was the king elevated to power, and having just obtained a great victory on the field, the prophet began his address in very touching terms: "And now, behold, the king walketh before you, and I am old and gray headed; and behold, my sons are with you, and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day." He then appealed to the people as to his integrity as a judge. When had he ever taken a bribe, or displayed favoritism in the administration of justice? The people with one voice testified to his strictly honorable and upright conduct. He takes a rapid glance at their past history, showing from it God's goodness and their ingratitude. He then urges them to a holy life, and in great faithfulness said, "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king." Then solemnly lifting up his hands to heaven, the thunder rolled out in wild crashes, as if the voice of God was giving confirmation to his words.

Thus Samuel retired from his public duties as a magistrate, but still retained his office as prophet of the Lord. In consequence of Saul's constant disregard of God's will, Samuel is

commanded to anoint David, the son of Jesse, king in his stead. The best men have their seasons of timidity and unbelief, and Samuel showed, on this occasion, that he was no exception to the rule. He was afraid of the wrath of Saul, and very reluctantly obeyed the command of the Lord. When he came to the house of Jesse he first offered a solemn sacrifice, and then had the sons of the household brought before him. The eldest son, Eliab, was tall in person, and of a noble countenance, and he thought that he must be the one chosen for king; but the Lord rebuked him in these words, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature, for I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." How solemn is this thought! If kept in remembeance, how would it demolish the shams and hypocrisies of the world.

Seven more sons did Jesse pass before the man of God, but none of them were accepted. David, the youngest, was in the fields keeping sheep; he was sent for, and the moment he appeared the prophet anointed him king, in the presence of his brethren. Samuel died in Ramah, amid the lamentations of the whole nation. His was a noble character, the honor of God and the good of his fellow-men forming the ruling motive of his life. Early did he give his heart to God, and served him with untarnished reputation through all his long life. When he was taken away every family felt as if a father had departed, and tears of honest grief and affection watered his last resting place.

"Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." That blessedness surely rested upon the departure of the righteous Samuel.

"Hush'd was the evening hymn,
The temple courts were dark
The lamp was burning dim
Before the sacred ark;
When suddenly a voice divine
Rang through the silence of the shrine.

'The old man, meek and mild,
The priest of Israel, slept;
His watch the temple-child,
The little Levite, kept;
And what from Eli's sense was seal'd,
The Lord to Hannah's son reveal'd.

"O, give me Samuel's ear!
The open ear, O Lord!
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word;
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all.

"O, give me Samuel's heart!
A lowly heart, that waits
Where in Thy house Thou art,
Or watches at thy gates:
By day and night, a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will.

"O, give me Samuel's mind!
A sweet unmurmuring faith,
Obedient and resigned
To Thee in life and death;
That I may read, with childlike eyes,
Truths that are hidden from the wise."

## CHAPTER XV.

### DAVID, THE ROYAL PROPHET.

The birth-place of those who are to become great and distinguished attracts to it a world-wide attention. Bethlehem was but a small and insignificant place in itself; but it was honored to be the birth-place of David, the greatest of Israel's kings, and of Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords. David's early years were spent in in the humble employment of a shepherd. In those days his was an occupation that required great courage and activity, to defend the flocks from wild beasts. The sheep had often to be driven far from home, amid rugged scenery of surpassing grandeur. Sometimes, for months at a time, the shepherds would be absent from their homes, left to the company of their own thoughts, and communion with God through his own glorious works.

From his very childhood, David had, no doubt, been taught the fear of the Lord. The soul-stirring truths which God had spoken to his fathers, and the mighty wonders which he had wrought out before their eyes, had all been told him by his pious father, again and again, and led him early to choose the God of his fathers as his God. While attending upon his flocks, the thoughts in that lovely psalm beginning with "The Lord is my Shepherd," must have often passed through his mind. When he had been driven into the caves of the rocky mountains by a passing thunder storm, we can imagine that we see him raising his voice till it mingled with the roar of the mountain torrent, saying: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters; the voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kedesh." Many an evening after he had folded his flocks, he would look to the heavens, shining in their starry glory, and sing in a rapture of devout

gladness, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." His writings show that he was a lover of God's works, and was fond of listening to their teaching; and no doubt he often watched his flocks, and sang his song of praise on the very same spot where the angel host sang the coming of the world's Redeemer in words worthy of their harps, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men."

It has often been remarked how faithfully the Bible depicts the faults of the great men whose biographies it records. It does not attempt to glorify men, by picturing them as perfect, but to glorify the grace of God in saving sinful men, like ourselves, from the wrath to come. It has been common for infidels to point to David's great sins, and to ask sneeringly, if that is the man after God's own heart. But when was David after God's heart? Not when he was sinning; for then the fierce displeasure of the Lord was kindled against him, and severe punishments were let loose from the hand of Jehovah against him. If he was a great sinner he was also a great penitent, and it was when he saw and abhorred his sin as God did that he was after God's heart. He and God were of one mind about sin, and about the free grace that can alone save from it; and so they could walk together.

Why do those who talk so much about his sins, say not a single word about his repentance? Why do not they imitate him as a penitent, and not as a sinner? It is because they are not honest readers of the Bible, but are only seeking an excuse for their sins. Where can we find such deep anguish, such heart-rending sorrow for sin, as we see in the religious experience of David? Hark! How he cries as he sinks into the great depths of distress, and the pains of hell get hold upon his trembling soul. His tears were his food, night and day; he wets his pillow with his tears, and his spirit, smitten by the displeasure of the Almighty, cries out, "Pardon my iniquities, for they are great." Ah! yes, he is scourged as with a whip of scorpions, for his sins; till at last we see the loving hand of God lifting him up out of the horrible pit of despair in which he lay, and

putting his feet upon a rock, even the Rock of Salvation, putting a new song in his mouth.

In the last chapter we have spoken of Samuel as anointing David king; but Saul is not yet dead, and the young man goes on with his humble duties, assured that God will call him out into notice when he wants him. Nor had he long to wait. The hour was at hand that was to bring him prominently before the whole nation. Saul's army, and that of the Philistines are lying opposite to each other in battle array. David's brothers are with the army, and his father sends him with provisions to them.

We see this youth going towards the camp in his plain shepherd dress. To look upon him as he moves along, who would suppose him to be the man chosen of God to deliver Israel, and stand before the world in towering greatness down to the end of time? But thus it is in every great revolution in the affairs of men. The man for the occasion is raised up to do the work of the day; but he is seldom such a person as men in their wisdom would have chosen. Generally taken from humble and obscure positions; simple and unassuming in their manners; they yet show in great results, that they have been raised up by God to accomplish their special work. How clearly has this been seen in the raising up of such men as Lincoln and Grant, in the great rebellion. But to proceed with our narrative. As David drew near to the army he heard the shouting of the hosts, as if a battle was about to begin. This quickens his young blood, and with throbbing heart he pressed forward.

Just as he arrives a mighty champion comes forth from the army of the enemy, with a bold and insulting defiance to all Israel to meet him in single combat. Goliath was a man of gigantic proportions and was clad in a complete armor of brass. His weapons were of great size, and David was told this challenge he had put forth day by day for some time, but as yet it remained unanswered. David's cheek burned with the blush of shame, that this infidel should be so long allowed to triumph over the chosen people of God. His patriotism

and his piety were alike shocked. It was having a most depressing effect upon the army, and Saul had offered large rewards to any one who would meet this bold boaster. David is prepared to meet him, not forgetting the great strength of his antagonist, but trusting in the God of Israel. His words are indicative of a faith beautiful in its simplicity: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

Saul hears of this daring youth and wishes to see him. Perhaps he expected to see one of the largest, bravest, and long-tried heroes of his army; but instead of that there stands before him a beardless youth of eighteen years. He seeks to turn him from his brave purpose, but the youth remains firm in his determination to meet his vaunting foe; and Saul gives his consent in the words, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

The moment, big with great results, has come. The trumpet sounds and its clear notes echo among the hills. A solemn silence ensues. Down into the valley steps the man of giant strength, clad in glittering armor, and the slender youth, with his sling and a few stones from the brook, as his only weapons. But with undaunted and calm spirit the young hero goes forth, his trust in God, and knowing that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Ah! little did Jesse know the danger in which his darling boy was standing at that moment, and what mighty results were depending upon him. What were the feelings of his three brothers we cannot tell. A shout of contempt comes from the army of the Philistines as they look on the fair boy, and contrast him with their great champion.

But see, the two combatants advance; the anxiety in the vast multitude is intense. It is not a moment for words; and strong men, and brave warriors stand almost breathless with suspense. The little hero puts a stone in his sling, and swinging it rapidly around his head, it is propelled through the air with unerring aim, and smites the proud boaster dead. He fell, like some giant tree of the forest, the vaster its growth the more terrible the resounding downfall. Terror-stricken

the Philistines turn and flee, while the hosts of Israel shout forth the joy of their hearts in praise of the young victor. The victory is complete, and the future king is favorably introduced to his people

Let us remember that we have a spiritual battle to fight with a powerful enemy. As in the case of David, the odds are to all appearance against us. Our adversary, the devil, is skillful and practiced in this spiritual warfare. He comes to us armed with infernal weapons and hellish darts, and the struggle is for eternal life or death. We must go forth to meet him with faith as our only weapon, and the Lord of Hosts as our only defence. Thus resisting, he will flee from us. In like manner the world is a foe to grace, and we are not able to overcome it in our own strength. Some one said to Luther, "The world is against you;" to which he replied, "Then I am against the world." Faith can thus overcome the world—faith in the blood of Jesus. This blessed gospel was preached in paradise, was sealed by the blood of Abel, was rejoiced in by patriarchs, preached by prophets and apostles, and died for by innumerable martyrs. Let us hold it fast, and it will bring us off more than conquerors over all our foes.

David lay down the head of the Philistine at the feet of Saul, and is called to give an account of his family. That day he was introduced into the court and entered upon all the perils and dangers of public life. That day he gained much fame, much honor, but he got one of heaven's best blessings—a *true friend*. Saul's son, Jonathan, loved him as his own soul. It is most delightful to contemplate the sweet, constant friendship that from that day existed between these young men. It was a heartfelt sympathy and ardent love that never wavered, but grew in strength day by day, till death separated them from each other on earth, and now it is perpetuated in richer perfection in heaven. What a blessing to earth true friendship is! It is, indeed, a relic of paradise, come down to us from amid the ruins of the fall. Of it Robert Hall says, "It is a treasure possessed when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a

fountain of sweets to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible."

There is nothing more touching in poetry or eloquence, than David's lament when his friend died. It is a wail of anguish that has come down to us through all these ages, and that still starts the sympathetic tear. "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan! very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." David never forgot this dear friend. Long afterwards he takes his son, an afflicted youth under his protection, and treated him as his own son. "Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness, for Jonathan, thy father's sake."

It is a difficult thing, in this fallen world, to find such true friendship. And yet there is a strong craving in our nature after it. There is one true friend who will never disappoint us; it is the Lord Jesus, who will never leave nor forsake us, and who sticketh closer than a brother. Born for adversity, when others forsake us, he comes nearer in the warmth of a love that is to live forever. David had no way of repaying the love of his friend, except in the person of his son; so the dear Friend that died for us, is now in glory; his sorrows are forever ended, but there is one way in which we can show our love, that is by showing love to the poor and afflicted among his people. These are dear to his heart; they are as the apple of his eye, and when we seek them out, feed them, clothe them, and cheer them with our sympathy, Jesus looks down from his lofty seat in the heavens well pleased, and says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We come now to consider David as in adversity and passing through the deep waters of affliction. After the splendid achievement of the overthrow of the champion of the Philistines, he is taken into Saul's household, as one of his chief captains. This strange man professed great friendship for him, but it was not of long continuance. He was one of those

weak, passionate, impulsive characters, who are warm friends or bitter enemies, and may be both in the same day. A warm, ardent temperament, joined to a weak mind and an ambitious spirit, makes a hard case to live at peace with; and such was Saul. A circumstance occurs that awakens against David his rancorous hate. When returning from the battle-field, and passing through the cities, the army was received with shouts of welcome by the populace. Far and wide, from mouth to mouth, had spread the news of the great victory. Bands of patriotic women met them with songs of gladness, the burden of which was, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." Unfortunate words! They stir to its depths all the malignity and hate, and murderous revenge of his nature; and from that time till his death he became the deadly enemy of the young hero. Repeatedly he attempts his life in a manner most sneaking and cowardly. David has to flee from the court, and can find no rest from his inveterate enemy anywhere. Go where he will he is pursued and attacked. Well may it be said, "Jealousy is cruel as the grave."

Alas! how uncertain are earthly honors. The great deliverer of Israel, the man who but lately stood highest in favor at court and with the people, has now to flee from the habitations of men as if he were a criminal, and has to hide himself in holes and caves of the earth. How does he stand these trials? For the most part of his time his trust is in God, and he triumphs over his trials. At other times he sinks into unworthy expedients to get out of his troubles, and giving way to dark thoughts and unbelieving fears, says, "I shall one day perish by the hand of my enemy." This language was unworthy of one for whom God had done so much, and who knew so well the faithfulness of the promises. But thus it is with us all. There is a constant struggle going on, the flesh pulling one way, the spirit of truth the other; now faith prevailing, and then unbelief, till we seem like two different persons at different times, according to the influence prevailing. Alas! How sinful is this state of things, and how much do we need the services of the Great Advocate to plead for us.

During his exile a circumstance occurs that shows the forgiving spirit of David. Saul, in chasing him among the mountains, has gone into a cave and fallen asleep. In that state David found him, and had it in his power to take his life. To this he was tempted by many strong inducements; but he nobly resisted them all, and only cut off a portion of his enemy's garment that he might know that he had been in his power.

The effect of this act of forbearance upon Saul was, for a time, most wonderful. His hard heart was touched; he melted into tears; the generous kindness of the youth he had so much injured smote his soul with regret for the past, and he promised amendment for the future. But no confidence could be put in his promises. From impulsive natures like his, a sudden outbreak of good feeling sometimes shows itself like sparks of fire struck out of the cold, hard flint, but it is soon gone and their habitual state of mind returns again. Thus it was with Saul. His persecutions soon become as relentless as ever. But his last hour comes. He enters his last battle, in which all goes against him. His three sons are slain, the day is lost, and to avoid the disgrace of being taken, this strange child of passion kills himself with his own sword.

And now a change takes place with the son of Jesse. His wanderings for the present are over, and the bright sun of prosperity, coming from under the cloud, shines upon his head. I believe it was Luther who said that always before being called to perform any high and honorable work for God he was made to pass through severe afflictions of some kind. David had long known trouble, now he comes forth from the hiding-place of the cave to the throne and the crown. After twelve years of trouble and incessant persecution, he is called by the voice of the people to the high position of Israel's king.

He was now in the full vigor of young manhood, and few kings have ever mounted the throne with richer endowments, both spiritual and physical. Long accustomed to toil and danger, the earth for his bed and the heavens for his covering, he is not likely to let the affairs of the nation be neglected

through effeminate habits, as many have done. He has been taught in a stern school the instability of all earthy things, and that God is the sovereign Ruler among the nations of the earth.

When established in power, the first thing he did was to drive out a small remnant of the Canaanites that were still in the land. The Jebusites had possession of a city which they considered impregnable, and insultingly defied David to take it. He did take it, and after repairing the fort and enlarging the wall he made it the capital of his kingdom. This was Jerusalem, though then called the city of David. It is the oldest existing city in the world, and no other has such stirring and solemn memories connected with it. It has been five times taken in bloody conflict, and twice has it been leveled to the ground. Here he erected for himself a palace, and when it was completed it was dedicated by that song of praise which we find in the thirtieth Psalm, "O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

What a glorious hope is that of the Christian! His troubles shall soon be ended, and a crown and throne far more splendid than David's shall be his. He shall have a palace, too, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens. O what a glorious, sweet, lovely home! Read a description of the happy condition of those that live there, and long for the hour that shall bid you enter its joys. "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, nor shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water." What a sweet promise is that which is given us: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This hope, nay, this blessed certainty, may well fill us with joy unspeakable, even in a world which sin has made a vale of tears.

David now began to make preparation for bringing the ark

of God to Jerusalem. It was a solemn procession and had a most important meaning. It was God taking up his abode among them. And as the ark moved on through the assembled thousands, amid shouts of joy and the sounding of trumpets, we are reminded of what happened ages after, when God manifested in the flesh walked in those same streets amid the waving of palm branches, and cries of "Hosanna to the son of David." As the procession came up the slope of Mount Zion, the singers sang the sixty-eighth Psalm. "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever." And when it arrived at the resting-place of the ark, the singers broke out into that sublime dialogue in the twenty-fourth Psalm. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; the king of glory shall come in. Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts; he is the king of glory."

About this time David began to cherish in his heart a strong desire to build a temple to the Lord. At this time his mind seems to have been in a most spiritual state. His faith seems to have grown stronger by the trials through which it had passed, just as the oak grows all the stronger for the storms that beat upon it. It was not God's design that he should build his house, that honor being reserved for his son; but he was told that in as far as it was in his heart to do it, the Lord accepted the will for the deed.

This is an encouraging principle of the Divine government; especially so to those sincere and deeply pious souls who, thinking of all that God has done for them, never feel as if they could do enough for him. They plan, in the depth of their loving hearts, all manner of ways by which they may honor his name and promote his cause; but through bodily infirmity, or the loss of worldly property, or obstacles thrown in their way by agents of evil, they are disappointed; and their throbbing hearts need the comfort of the Lord's words to David, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart."

When the holy and devoted Rev. Samuel Pearce, was on his death-bed, a young friend of his just about to start for India

as a missionary, came to bid him farewell. It was a most affecting occasion to both, as they were well assured they should never meet again on earth. The parting was most tender, but brightened by the certainty of a joyful meeting in glory.

But strange to say, the young missionary was the first to die. Though in perfect health at the time of sailing, he sickened and died before reaching the dark land of heathenism where he had hoped to do so much for the Lord. Soon after Pearce died, and Andrew Fuller speaks of the surprise with which these happy souls would meet in the blessed land. He represented Pearce as saying, "I thought that by this time you were working for Jesus in India." "That was my hope and intention," the missionary replies," but my dear Lord had other designs. He called me away in the midst of my plans and projects of usefulness, and here I am, an unworthy inhabitant of the heavenly Canaan." While they are discussing this matter, they are joined by a spirit high in glory, who upon learning the subject of their discussion says, "This reminds me of my experience when on earth. It was strongly in my heart to build a temple to God's glory. I was ready to make any sacrifice to accomplish this object; but my Lord told me that high honor was not to be mine, but that as far as it was in my heart to do the work, the wish was graciously accepted as if the work had been done." This last speaker was David, and as he concludes he tunes his harp to a lofty song of praise in honor of Him who doeth all things well. I have given this beautiful conception of Fuller from memory, giving his thoughts but not his words.

Here is a young man who, with much toil and self-denial, goes through a long course of training for preaching the good news. But when ready, he is taken away by death, after preaching but a few months, or it may be but a few sermons. The talented author of the "Course of Time," was only allowed to preach once or twice, before being called to his eternal home. Is all that preparation to be lost? By no means. God recognizes what was in the hearts of his young servants to do for him, as if it was done; and he has higher

serv.ce for them to do in other departments of his vast dominions, where their talents and knowledge may find abundant scope.

So, dear child of God, take comfort, when unable to give to the Savior's cause as you would like. Though so poor as to drop a mite into the Lord's treasury, your Lord sees thousands of dollars in your heart; and in the great day of account, he may say of you, before an assembled world, that you have given more than all the others of your associates, in giving that small sum, of which you were almost ashamed. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted; not according to what he hath not, but according to what he hath."

And to the invalid, laid aside from active work in the Lord's vineyard, this subject is full of comfort. His plan of active labors are all broken off, cut short of accomplishment. He had it in his heart to do so much, and now can do so little. His unfinished designs, like broken columns, stand up around him, and, gazing at them with tearful eyes, he cries, "Why is it thus?" Ah! my brother, God knows what is in your heart, and approves it well; but he wants to lay you aside from the busy rush of life, from the conflicting passions and strifes of earth, that you may find your all in God himself. He wants to make you look into the grave of your disappointed hopes, your blighted expectations, that high above the perishing and mutable things of time, you may learn to drink in immortal life from your Savior's love. There he tells thee the tree of life grows; and there only are eyes that tears never dim, hearts beating with rapture that disappointment never turns to sorrow, and a perfection of life that is to know no death. You go into the crowded, though silent city of the dead, and you see sweet flowers growing over the graves of the dead,—flowers born of corruption, and watered with tears, and fanned with sighs. So, over the grave of all your plans, God will cause to grow the fair flowers of the heavenly graces that are to bloom forever in immortal beauty in the paradise of God.

DAVID PLAYING BEFORE SAUL.

" His purposes shall ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour,
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

So far it has been most pleasant and delightful to watch the career of David. It is true that we have not seen in him a perfect character, for that does not belong to sinful man; even the bright sun has his spots; but, for the most part, our hearts have glowed with admiration of the conduct of Jesse's son. Prosperity does not seem to have spoiled him, and out of the furnace of fiery trial he comes forth refined. We have followed him up to a pinnacle where, if he falls at all, the fall must be very great. And, alas! fall he did, or, rather, cast himself down headlong. Oh, who could have expected this? The sudden change fills us with horror. One moment of temptation and we look upon David the adulterer and the murderer! We can scarcely believe our eyes or our ears, and are ready to ask, can it be the same person? Alas! it is but too true. How are the mighty fallen!

In reading the account of David's fall, we can enter into the feelings of Bishop Hall; "With what unwillingness, with what fear do I look upon the miscarriage of the man after God's own heart! Oh, holy prophet, who can promise himself to stand, when he sees thee fallen, and maimed with the fall? Let profane eyes behold thee contentedly, as a pattern, as an excuse for sinning; I shall never look upon thee but through tears, as a woful spectacle of human infirmity."

There is generally a long preparatory process going on, unknown to the world, before professing Christians fall into outward sin, in this way. Gradually there is a decline of spirituality of mind; prayer is neglected; the mind gets filled with worldly thoughts and feelings; carnal desire slowly but surely gains the ascendancy; and a spirit of proud self-sufficiency takes possession of the soul. Then, when all the elements of evil are thus prepared the great temptation is presented, and the fall comes. It seems to be sudden, but is not really so. There was a long prelude of evil.

Thus was it with David. His army is in the field against the Ammonites. Instead of staying at home to enjoy the luxuries of his splendid palace, he should have been fighting the Lord's battles. Out of the path of duty, we are on Satan's ground, and liable to be attacked. We put ourselves into the way of temptation. The king is walking in the evening upon the roof of his house, when he saw Bathsheba, a beautiful woman, the wife of a brave soldier, now away fighting his battles, engaged in bathing herself. A pure delicacy should have led him to turn away, but he does not; and corrupt thoughts lead to vile actions. He becomes an adulterer, and then, to hide the shame of the transaction, resorts to the meanest plans to accomplish the death of the brave captain, Uriah, whom he had so greatly injured already. He effects this dark and horrid design, and stains his soul with the blood of murder.

Such is the progress of sin. It is said to be like the letting out of water; first a small, thread-like stream, trickling through the embankment, and then a roaring, dashing, irresistible torrent, leaving behind a track of desolation and death. The light of God is first resisted, then hated, then forcibly put out of the soul; till the poor, unhappy spirit gropes about in a darkness that may be felt. Conscience becoming stupefied and seared, for the time being, lays by its functions; and all restraint being removed, the miserable sinner rushes on, with increased velocity, down the road to eternal death.

It is a sad evidence of the blinding effects of sin, that months roll on, and there is no awakening of the king to repentance—no bitter throes of remorse in the soul of this sinful man. There seems to have been no dread of the vengeance of heaven; if the displeasure of man could be averted he was well content. It seemed as if all sense of right and wrong was dead within him; but it was not so. He was blinded, infatuated, and his conscience seared by sin. And this state of things would have continued forever, had it not been for God's mighty grace.

It was a kind providence that a faithful man of God was still

left in Israel, who did not fear kings nor kingly power, in the exercise of his duty. The fearless Nathan goes and tells David his sin to his face. He begins by a parable of a rich man, who had flocks and herds in great abundance; but when he wanted to make a feast for a guest, instead of taking his own, he took the one ewe lamb of a poor man. The king's brow grows dark with wrath. Such is the blinding effects of sin that even now he does not see his own great transgression, but thundered out, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and had no pity." Ah! how ready are sinners to see the fault of others, but blind as bats to their own. He is like the drunkard, that thinks the giddy and unsteady motion that he feels is in others, and in things around him, not in himself. To all of us there can be no more important warning than to beware lest we be hardened through the *deceitfulness* of sin.

Like a bolt of lightning the words of Nathan smote down the offender: "Thou art the man." Under the circumstances we cannot conceive of four more powerful words. It is a winged sentence coming from the throne of God, and the soul of David heaves as if volcanic fires had been kindled within him. As Paul's heart was changed by the sudden light that gleamed from heaven and struck him to the ground, so was the king of Israel all broken down by the bolt of truth that had been aimed so well; and he cries out, "I have sinned against the Lord." The sentence of punishment was then pronounced. The sword was not to depart from his house, and bitter heart troubles were to spring up out of his own household. He now saw his sin in all its horrid loathsomeness. Hour after hour and day after day did he ponder upon his guilt. He wanders about his palace in broken-hearted anguish, and by night he wet his pillow with tears. If ever there was a true penitent he was the man. The fifty-first Psalm was composed at this time by him, and gives us an insight into the state of his heart. "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean

heart, oh God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

How many broken hearts have been comforted as they poured out their cries for mercy in the words of this Psalm. And oh how gracious is our God. He sends him a message of mercy. "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Pardon for all sin, for the vilest transgressors, is the law of God's kingdom of grace. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. There is but one sin that cannot be pardoned, and that is a persistent rejection of Christ till life's last moment. Unbelief is a damning sin. It rejects heaven's only remedy, a certain cure for the evil of sin; and leaves nothing before the soul but a fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation.

A visitor among the poor in London, came in contact with a wretched man who repulsed every attempt to do him good. But the mother of this savage ruffian cried out from an inner room, "Does your book tell of the blood that cleanseth from all sin?" Going to her bedside, he said, "My poor friend, what do you want to know of the blood that cleanseth from all sin?" With great energy she replied, "Man, I am dying! I am going to stand before God. I have been a very wicked woman all my life. But once I stopped at the door of a church, and one word I can never forget. Oh, if I could hear it now! It was something about the blood that cleanseth from all sin."

The visitor read her the words from the New Testament; her soul grasped them by faith, and she died in assurance of pardon. Her son also was saved by the same glorious truth.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### DAVID, THE ROYAL PROPHET. [CONTINUED.]

David is forgiven, but that is not to avert the effect of his sin in bringing punishment. As we showed in the chapter on Jacob, there is a great difference between grace and government. God's grace pardons David, freely, fully pardons him; but the Divine government must make an example of his sin. Thus while he is rejoicing in the sweet voice of grace that tells him of pardon, he feels the strokes of the rod of government fall heavy and fast upon his head.

He was a very fond father, and the blows fell upon the most tender part of his nature. Take Bishop Sanderson's description of his troubles. "As Nathan foretold to him, so a world of mischief and misery fell out to him from this one presumptuous act. His daughter was defiled by her brother; that brother was slain by another brother; a strong conspiracy was raised against him by his own son; his concubines were openly defiled by the same son; himself afflicted by the untimely death of that son, who was his darling; reviled and cursed to his face by a base, unworthy companion, besides many other troubles, affronts and vexations."

Of all his troubles, the revolt and death of Absalom was the most severely felt. That abandoned youth put himself at the head of a strong faction, drove his father from Jerusalem, and again made him a fugitive on the face of the earth. When Joab marshaled his army and went forth to crush this vile, unnatural rebellion, the express orders of the king to his general were, "Beware that none touch the young man, Absalom." This son, in whose beautiful body dwelt a fearfully corrupt soul, had heaped upon the head of his father every kind of insult, public and private; and yet, the loving heart of the

parent clings to him, and would avert from him his deserved doom. The stern and brave general, however, paid no attention to this injunction; but finding him, caught him by the hair in the branches of a tree, killed him with his own hand.

While the battle is raging, David sits between the gates of the city, looking with great anxiety for intelligence from the scene of action; and as one after another came in hot haste to tell of victory, his first question is, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" And when told that he was slain, the agony of his soul breaks out in one of the most pathetic wails of distress ever heard: "He was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." If such was the depth of love felt by an earthly father, how great must be the love of the heavenly Father to his offending children. He gave his son to die for us, and when that last gift of his love is rejected, and the righteous stroke of death is about to fall, he cries out, "O how can I give thee up!"

And now for a short time there comes a lull in the storm of adversity, a calm day of repose after the troubles through which he had passed. The deranged country is once more at peace, and a return of prosperity begins to obliterate the traces of war. David was comforted, and it is feared that he became lifted up with pride, for he fell into the last great error of his reign. I refer to his numbering of the people. At first sight this may seem but a small offence, but from the severity of the punishment that was inflicted, it was not so regarded in God's eyes. Let us try to consider in what his sin consisted.

It has been thought by some that the reason why the king wished this census taken was from a vain-glorious pride of heart as to the number of subjects over which he ruled. There may have been something of this; but I have no doubt that the cause was unbelief of heart, or distrust of God. He ought to have known that the strength or greatness of a nation is not in the number of its population, or the vastness of its army,

but in the blessing of the Most High God. It was not that the numbering of the people was in itself sin; for under some circumstances that might be a duty; but it was the dark distrust of God that lay at the bottom of this matter that brought down upon him the displeasure of heaven. He is remonstrated with by Joab, but heeds it not. Nine months are taken up in this work, during which time his heart remains insensible to his folly. But when the numbers are put into his hand he awakes to the knowledge of the evil he has done. The prophet of God is sent to rebuke him and announce his punishment. He has his choice of three years of famine, three months of defeat by his enemies, or three days of pestilence in the land.

The choice which the king made was a wise one. He chose pestilence, as that came directly from the hand of the Lord, and was something to which he would be as much exposed as the poorest of his subjects. "Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great, and let us not fall into the hand of man." An angel was employed to inflict the punishment that had been threatened. This minister of Divine displeasure appeared to David and his elders. His aspect was one well calculated to excite awe." He stood between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem." The king in great distress of soul, cast himself upon the ground, pleading for the life of his people. He offers himself as a sacrifice: "So I have sinned, and have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house."

Praying breath was never spent in vain; his supplications were heard, the city is spared at his request, and the Lord said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; stay now thy hand." An altar was built upon that spot and grateful sacrifices offered up to the hearer of prayer. In all this matter David appears as a sincere penitent. He mourned before God on account of his sin; he sent up his earnest cry for mercy; he was more ready to condemn himself than others, and was willing to bear alone the result of his sins. In short, from this time forth

his life flows on in one consistent stream of works of faith and labors of love.

As a prophet, how clearly he spoke of the coming of Christ. Jesus and his Apostles often appealed to the Psalms which spoke of the coming Messiah as being the eternal Son of God, the Great High Priest, the imparter of the Holy Spirit and the resurrection from the dead. In the Psalms the most minute particulars of our Lord's sufferings are given by the spirit of prophecy. His being betrayed by one of his own chosen band, the casting lots for his raiment, and the giving him vinegar to drink on the cross.

This book of Psalms has been a most blessed legacy to the church of God. How sublimely does it describe the attributes of God, especially his mercy. The penitent can here find the most fit language of confession; when blessings are received the thankful soul can here find glowing words of praise; and when the pardoned sinner would break out into a song of highest rapture he will find it in the Psalms. These songs are everywhere applicable and appropriate; by land and by sea, in joy or sorrow, in palaces or prisons, for they are the sincere out-gushing of a human heart in all the circumstances in which our common humanity is placed. A sweet simplicity of style is united to great sublimity of thought, so that they are suited for the learned and the unlearned alike. In short, there are no utterances among all the prophets so dear to pious minds as these sweet songs. At one time the Psalmist carries us among the works of God, to fill us with rapture and awe; "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Sometimes he breaks out in a rapture of praise almost too great for words. "Sing unto the Lord a new song; for his right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory." And in a transport of love he calls upon all nature to help him to praise God; the trees, the gray rocks, the lofty mountains: "Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

David now began to feel the effect of age and infirmity creeping upon him. He has yet much to do, and but little

time in which to do it. Though his bodily powers begin to fail, his strong mind retains all its powers. He assembles together the princes, the captains of the army, and leading men of the nation, and addressed them with great solemnity and power in regard to establishing the worship of God. He spoke of his ardent desire to build a house for the Son, and of the revelation he had received that that work was to be performed by Solomon, his son. Then turning to that son, he charged him in the presence of them all, to give himself to this matter with honesty of purpose. He also gave to his son an exact description of the temple as it had been delivered to him from heaven, and contributed, from his own resources, great wealth to be devoted to this object.

This liberal example had a good effect upon the people; their contributions poured in with the greatest readiness, as if they were delighted to aid so good a work. They gave not grudgingly, but of a ready mind. The aged king was delighted with this zeal for the Lord's cause, and broke out, before them all, in warm and devout acknowledgment to God for so disposing their hearts, and in earnest prayer for Solomon's reign. Then the whole congregation worshiped together; sacrifices were offered to God, and David resigned his regal authority to Solomon, who was anointed king in his stead.

But it is the lot of the greatest of earth's sons to die. Those who ruled millions with a word, and on whose will the fate of nations hung suspended, must fall before the King of Terrors. So, great warrior and mighty monarch as David had been, the time came when he must die. We gather around his dying bed, and listen eagerly to hear his last words. That hand, once so strong to wield the implements of war, is now palsied with age, and the cares of many years have plowed deep furrows upon his face.

What are the subjects upon which his mind dwells in this solemn hour? Is he proudly recalling the time when as a shepherd boy he came, all unknown, from the plains of Bethlehem, and smote the proud and boastful Philistine, and turned the whole fortunes of the day in favor of his people? Is he

thinking of the shout of joy that greeted him from a whole nation when he ascended the throne, and of the long list of brilliant victories by which he made that throne so secure? Ah! no: these look but small things when viewed from a death-bed. Other thoughts, more noble and suitable, are filling his soul. The sovereignty of God, the comforts of the Divine covenant, so full and sure. and the unchangeableness of Jehovah's love, are the vastly important themes upon which his mind dwells. His dying words are, "Although my house be not so with God. yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

We here notice his touching confession in regard to his family: 'Although my house be not so with God." We have already seen that his youth was full of devotedness to God, and the years of adversity that followed his entering upon public life, seem to have driven him nearer to God. The unfaithfulness of his fellow-men made him think more of God's faithfulness, and the persecution of Saul only made him cling more firmly to the covenant promises of his Divine Friend in heaven, who knew all that was in his heart.

But the full cup of prosperity was more than he could bear. When lifted up upon the high eminences of life he became high-minded and fell into the snare of the devil. As a head of a family he was destituted of all government. Foolishly fond of his children, he let them have their own way. The result was what might have been expected: spoiled by indulgence, they embroiled him and his kingdom in trouble and disgrace.

It is a sad sign of how great is the depravity of our nature when even good men fall into sin. After all that grace has done for them, after such a marvelous change has been wrought by the Holy Spirit, after a new life has been implanted, a life that is spiritual, imperishable, progressive, and that is to grow up to a glory and heavenly beauty of which we can form no proper conception; yet so strong are the remains of sin, that it occasionally breaks out in a way that astonishes the world.

If God's mighty grace were to leave the best of men to himself for one moment; if proud, self-righteous thoughts gain the ascendancy; if the fascination of sin gets its entanglements around him, he must fall into the snare of the enemy. Upon no prop can we lean with safety but Christ's love; no safe refuge but in his grace.

When good men fall into sin they are awakened to penitence. While the sinner goes on growing worse and worse, the erring child of God is awakened to a knowledge of his guilt that makes him condemn himself more than his friends have done. I once knew a minister who in an hour of sudden temptation fell into sin. He was in awful anguish of soul. His old friends were denouncing him, the newspapers were blaming him, the ungodly were rejoicing in his downfall, and calling him by the vilest of names, but none of them spoke so much against him as he did against himself. It was heart-rending to witness his agony of soul under the rebukes of conscience and the convictions of the Holy Spirit. I think that if the most hardened sinner had been in that man's company for an hour he would have had a strong conviction that though he had sinned greatly, he was still a son of God. Yes, such an one may wander far, but grace never gives him up; it keeps him in view go where he may, and in some favorable opportunity flashes conviction over his soul, producing a repentance that needs not to be repented of. Some messenger is sent, whose words pierce his soul like fire-tipped arrows, singling him out from the whole world, with "Thou art the man."

After this return to God is brought about by afflictions, the soul is swept up by some terrible tempest, that seems to crush it down, as in some dark night the sturdy tree of the forest is laid low. The furnace is heated, but God's eye keeps watch that his child shall not be consumed, but only purified.

Peter and Judas both sinned against Jesus. Peter was a real Christian, and showed it by going out and weeping bitterly; Judas was only a mere professor, and he showed it by going from bad to worse, and rushing uncalled into eternity, with the blood of murder upon his soul.

David in his dying moments had but one truth to which he could cling; God's covenant of grace through Jesus. The religion that saves the soul has always been essentially the same in all ages. From the fall downwards the only hope of the sinner has been the blood of the covenant. It begins with the promise of a Savior in the garden of Eden, and ever since has been saving lost souls. From the garden of Eden to the garden of Gethsemane, and up to Calvary, it has uttered but one voice, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."

It is called by the king of Israel an "everlasting covenant." It is so in its conception in the Divine mind. The plan of salvation was no *new idea* to Jehovah to meet an unexpected difficulty. Long before this world was swung out into space from the Creator's hand, long before he made those orbs of light that sparkle in the canopy of heaven, long before the comet was sent forth to wander through space, or when space was shoreless or unborn, this wonderful plan of mercy was in God's thoughts. The Holy Trinity are represented as in consultation devising means for man's redemption. But this is only in accommodation to our weakness of comprehension. Infinite wisdom needs no deliberation. With God there is no weighing of measures, no balancing of expedients, no examination of different plans. Before his Omniscient eye all things stand unveiled in their truest order and in their fittest arraignment; the means, the agency and the end are all before him from all eternity; he cannot be taken by surprise, nor does he need to change his plans to meet unexpected emergencies.

This covenant is everlasting in its saving results. The believer is not saved for a few years, but for ever and ever. Once in Christ by a living faith, he can no more be lost than his Great Substitute can be lost. The Savior's own words are, "They shall never perish." All hell, and all the elements of evil on earth may unite against him, but he shall never perish. Like David and like Peter, the enemy may seem to have him in his power for a season, but the Great Advocate is pleading for him, and he can never perish. And when the dangers of

earth are over, and the ages of eternity roll on, they shall all unite who have ever known this grace to sing His praises who wrought out this everlasting salvation.

Another noticeable point in the description of this covenant is, "well ordered in all things." It is just suitable to the case of sinners. Man is a guilty being, and often feels the terror of this through all the powers of his soul. When the Spirit of God makes him feel the strictness of the holy law, and its awful curses thickening and darkening around his soul; to hear that this law has been vindicated and the claims of justice satisfied by the death of Jesus, gives peace and assurance of acceptance. To trust in a man's own good deeds is seen by the enlightened mind to be the highest folly. To suppose that the performance of a few good deeds, even allowing them to be good, could cancel a lifetime of sin is a view of God's character at once the most foolish and pernicious. Here is a criminal before a court, accused of stealing his neighbor's goods. What plea does he make? Why this: that he has obeyed far more laws than he has broken, that he had only stolen once or twice, but had been honest all the rest of his life. How would such a plea look in the eyes of the judge and jury? They would treat it with scorn. And men of intelligence in other things are found trusting in such a hope between God and their souls.

But surely present obedience can never make up for past disobedience; for if we obeyed perfectly all our lives we would only be doing our duty. If we failed in one act, that is sin, and that one sin unpardoned will ruin the soul forever. And it cannot be pardoned by setting over against it some duty or duties well performed. You can never recall a sin, nor blot it out of God's record by anything you can do. The blood of Jesus alone can blot out sin, all sin, sin to the very uttermost extent of sinning. And to refuse to recognize this truth, is to add to the sin of breaking God's holy law, the yet greater sin of rejecting the Savior. You need pardon, in Him you have it rich and free. You need a perfect righteousness, and here it is, more pure and spotless than an angel. You need a title

to heaven, and here it is, signed and sealed by the Judge. But David said this covenant was sure. Well, this is more than can be said of earthly things, of which men now make so much. When a few years have gone what a change do they leave behind them, in blighted hopes, disappointed expectations, and vacant chairs at family gatherings. A father of a large home circle had been long absent; but the day of his expected arrival had at last come. Every heart was joyful, every eye was bright with love. The very hour fixed for the joyful meeting has come, and the tea-table waits the happy throng that were to gather around it. Meanwhile the father is coming rushing, on in the cars, with a happy heart. The last entry which he had made in his journal was, "Now for home." But as he nears the place there is a crash, a wild shriek from hundreds of voices, and that loving father lies dead. The hopes of that family are gone out in darkness. Like thousands, they have found that the things of earth are not sure.

"I thought that the course of the pilgrim to heaven
Would be bright as the summer, and glad as the morn;
Thou showedst me the path, it was dark and uneven,
All rugged with rock, and all tangled with thorn.

"I dreamt of celestial rewards and renown,
I grasped at the triumph which blesses the brave;
I asked for the palm-branch, the robe, and the crown,
I asked—and Thou showedst me a Cross and a Grave."

All that can be said about the uncertainty of earthly things is true, but should be used to draw us to the greater truth to which David clung, the sureness of every thing about the covenant of redemption. Its doctrine of justification by faith is sure; its precious promises are sure; its peace and unspeakable joys here are sure; and the unending bliss which it fixes our hopes upon beyond the boundary line of time are sure. Let all who have found the world a vain show, a delusion and a snare, turn to the faith and true word of God, that never deceives. Every earthly trust may perish, but they that wait upon the Lord shall surely renew their strength.

David could say in his last moments, "This is all my hope and all my desire." To have all the hope in Christ makes a happy life and a happy death. To have a divided hope, a little in Christ and a little in something else, makes an unhappy professor. The religion of such people makes them miserable, being one of alternate hope and fear, doubts and trusts, joys and sorrows. A writer in a religious paper says: "A company of captives were one day set at liberty. For many years they had been in bonds; and the joy of being set free was like a foretaste of heaven. But there was one who, instead of rejoicing in his freedom, gathered up his broken fetters and carried them with him on his homeward journey. Wherever he stopped he might be heard mourning: 'Oh, these chains, these chains! What misery have they caused me!' And at last death found him still hugging his chains to his bosom."

Thus it is with many professing Christians. Christ shed his blood to redeem them from the curse of the law. He wishes them to be his freemen, rejoicing in true gospel freedom from the curse of the law, the condemnation of sin, and the terror of coming wrath. But they will not be made happy. They speak as if they must still be saved by the law; and as if Jesus had not shed his blood at all for sin, they keep crying out, "Oh, my sins, my sins! what is to become of me because of my sins?"

Several years ago a passenger vessel was crossing the Atlantic ocean, when, one afternoon, all on board were startled by the fearful cry, "A man overboard!" It was a young lad, who, when attending to some duty on the bowsprit of the ship, had been swept off by a mighty wave. The life-boat was instantly lowered, and stout arms were propelling her with all speed toward the drowning youth. On the deck stood four hundred persons intensely excited, and watching the result with throbbing hearts and tearful eyes.

As a strong wind was blowing at the time, a great distance soon separated the ship from the life-boat and the youth that it had gone to save. But now and again they could see him rise, struggling for life, upon the crest of some great wave,

while every moment brought the life-boat nearer. At last a strong arm is stretched out to grasp him, and very soon he was safe on deck.

The editor of the "New York Evangelist," who was on board, says: "Never did we experience such feelings of relief as at that moment. A murmur of joy and approbation, though almost choked with tears, ran through the ship, a thrill like that which runs through heaven when a soul, shipwrecked and ready to perish, is rescued and brought back to God.

Now, for this drowning young man there was but one hope —the life-boat. His safety did not depend upon his past life, whether good or bad, but upon getting into the life-boat. He did not need to raise any question as to whether that boat was built to save him, nor as to who built it, and what were the intentions of its builder. There it comes to him in his extremity, and the great thing was to get aboard. So Jesus invites the sinner to come to him and be saved, just as he is. He must see that the Lord is in earnest when he invites. He would not ask him to come to him, if he was not prepared to receive him the moment he does come; and once in the Lord he shall never be confounded.

Such was the hope of the Psalmist in his last moments. Upon this he pillowed his dying head, and his own description of the dying saint was applicable to his own case, "The end of that man is peace." Some Christians, in their closing moments on earth, have unspeakable raptures of joy; but much depends upon the nature of the disease that takes them away. But all who are in Jesus die safely. David Brainerd said, on his death-bed, "The grave appeared really sweet, and I longed to lodge my weary bones in it." And again, "Oh, blessed God, I am speedily coming to thee, I hope. Hasten the day, if it be thy blessed will."

Said another dying saint, "Faith lies at anchor in the midst of the waves, and believes the accomplishment of the promises through all overturning confusions. Upon this God do I live, who is our God forever, and will be our guide even unto death. Methinks I lie becalmed in his bosom." As Luther said in

such a case, "I am not much concerned. Let Christ see to it. I have nothing to fear." A missionary lady, Mrs. Bixly, died exclaiming, "Precious Jesus!" "Matchless grace!" "Joy, joy, joy!"

But I must close. Let us learn, from David's history, the importance of watchfulness in the day of prosperity. A man who had got a large fortune left him, sent to his church a request for prayer. He felt that he was in a dangerous position —standing on slippery places. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Let us also learn to welcome the word of God, even when it comes to smite and condemn us. Nathan's preaching was very painful to David. But he did not kill the preacher, like Herod, because he did not preach smooth things. He did not get into a rage and hate the preacher instead of hating his sins, as many do. No, he let the truth come in its condemning power, and starting back from the brink of ruin cried, "Forgive my iniquities, because they are great." He did not try to excuse them, or make them appear small.

"I gave my life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead
I gave my life for thee,
What hast thou done for me.

"I spent long years for thee
In weariness and woe,
That one eternity
Of joy thou might'st know;
I spent long years for thee;
Hast thou spent *one* for me?

"My Father's house of light,
My rainbow-circled throne,
I left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone;
I left it all for thee;
Hast thou left *aught* for me?

"I suffered much for thee,
More than thy tongue can tell,
Of bitterest agony,
To rescue thee from hell;
I suffered much for thee;
What 'dost thou *bear* for me?

"And I have brought to thee,
Down from my home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and my love;
Great gifts I brought to thee;
What hast thou *brought* to me?

"Oh, let thy life be given,
Thy years for me be spent,
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy with suffering blent
Give thou *thyself* to me,
And I will welcome thee!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ELIJAH, THE TISHBITE.

Elijah is one of the greatest of the prophets; perhaps, with the exception of Moses, the greatest of them all. Indeed, between him and the great law-giver there are many points of resemblance. They both come from God at a very dark period of the history of the Church. They both show great faith and invincible bravery in dealing with wicked men in high power; and ages after, from among the innumerable multitude in heaven, these two were chosen to meet the Lord on the mount of transfiguration.

Of the youth and early history of Elijah we are told nothing. He bursts upon us all at once in the sacred history, a full-grown prophet of the Lord; and the first words we hear from him, are such as make our ears tingle, and that smote against the king and his guilty court like huge billows of wrath. He comes upon us sudden as the lightning flashes from heaven, or, as one says, "a meteor kindled at the eye and blown on the breath of the Eternal."

Religion was at a low ebb at this time, idolatry having usurped the place of the worship of the God of heaven. The priests of Baal had taken possession of the land, erected their altars upon the hills, and made the groves resound with their abominable blasphemies. The wicked king Ahab, and his wife Jezebel, did all they could to encourage and perpetuate this state of things. But the darkest hour is before the dawn; and God's messenger, with the flashing sword of truth in his hand, and Almighty power to defend him, has come to Israel.

Elijah was a man of a strong and marked individuality of character. His history impresses us, so that we seem to see him stand before us, the perfect representative of true greatness, and to hear him thunder out his heaven-sent message,

with a courage that excites our admiration and wins our love. It was the highest and noblest kind of courage, true moral courage. There is often a great amount of mere animal courage, while the courage worthy of a man is wanting. To dash into the conflict of the battle-field, and in the wild excitement of the moment to perform deeds of wonderful daring, is often done by men who shrink back from doing what God and conscience tells them is right lest they should encounter the sneer of their companions in sin. Boasting of their courage they are the veriest cowards in the cause of eternal right. Many a Christian lady, who would turn pale at the sight of blood, has boldly gone into the consuming flame, or walked to the scaffold with songs of victory, rather than deny her Lord. This is true courage worthy of immortal and responsible beings; the other kind is possessed by tigers and bull-dogs, in larger measure than by man.

Elijah goes boldly into the presence of the king, with plain garments and yet plainer speech. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Now, the inspired writers let us know that this closing up the heavens, and opening them again was the result of prayer. The apostle James says, "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Is it possible that a mortal man can thus have power with God? It is possible and true; and forms one of the wonders of his condescending love. Believing prayer takes hold of the Almighty's strength, it has the key that unlocks the treasures of heaven, and it has power to move that hand that moves all things. Oh Christian, be you man or minister, maid or matron, of exalted position, or in poverty's vale, get the spirit of faith in prayer, and nothing shall be impossible unto you Obstacles of all kinds in the path of duty will be removed or turned into helps; rocks will be rent, and red seas part at

your bidding; and heaven's wonderful treasures will be at your command!

I am profoundly impressed with the thought that the grand defect of the religion of the day is, a lack of strong, unshaken confidence in the power of prayer. There are plenty of public forms of prayer, and great activity, energy, and enthusiasm in missions, and Sabbath Schools, and what is called Christian enterprise; but I fear that the strong, wrestling importunity, the giving up of days to faithful pleading with God, the assured faith that the very things asked of God will be given, however unlikely to the eyes of sense, or the cold abstractions of science, which marked the Christians of former times, are wanting. God grant that in this I may be mistaken, but I have not the consolation of thinking so, from all I see and know among professing Christians. There is a desperate effort being made in our day to take as much of the supernatural out of religion as possible, and prayer is largely represented, not as man asking, and God directly giving, but as only doing us good indirectly by bringing our minds in contact with God. If men ever succeed in getting the supernatural out of religion, there will be no religion left worth having—a mere cold compound of science and philosophy, with a dark, cheerless gloom of infidelity to pervade all. But God will take care that such a time shall never come.

We have seen, as far as we have gone in this book, that all these men of faith were men of prayer. They asked what they wanted direct from God, and got direct answers. We can see that they were not troubled with the modern nonsense, held by some calling themselves ministers of Christ, that God does not directly give us anything now, but that all there is in prayer is the reflex influence it has upon our own minds. This is an invention of the enemy to get men to give up prayer altogether: and it is very certain that Satan would not tremble before a million of prayers founded on such a theory.

According to this notion, Abraham did not keep back the storm of coming wrath for a time from Sodom; his prayer only produced a benevolent effect upon his own mind. On

the same theory, that little band in John Mark's cottage, praying all night, had no effect in the deliverance of Peter from prison, that would have happened at any rate; but then they had a good time; not that their prayers moved God, but only moved themselves. Away with such infidel notions, coming sneaking into Christian pulpits and prayer meetings, under false colors! Every real Christian knows that God does directly answer prayer every day; though not by miracles, for with a completed revelation that is not necessary; but by proofs of His interference in human affairs as direct as any miracle.

But to be successful at a throne of grace, we must not only have faith, but be willing to make sacrifices to secure special seasons of prayer. The gay, the worldly, the gambler, give up night after night to the service of sin; do we give up an hour of the quiet night to be alone with God? In some of his great troubles, Luther was heard agonizing in prayer thus: "Oh God! Oh thou my God! Help me against all the wisdom of the world. Thou should'st do this. The work is not mine, but Thine. I have no business here. The cause is Thine, and it is everlasting and righteous." And again he was heard crying, "Lord, where art Thou? My God, where art Thou? Come, I pray Thee; I am ready. Behold me prepared to lay down my life for Thy truth I will not let Thee go; I will cling to Thee forever. Oh God, send help!" Listen to the midnight cry of John Knox, feeling almost at the point of death in his great importunity; and John Welsh, found by his wife on a cold night, prostrate on the floor, pleading for the cause of God in Scotland. Ah! this is something different from *saying* prayers. Try it, my reader. You have Jesus for your example. "He went up into a mountain to pray, and contined all night in prayer to God." Oh, could we only have hid ourselves behind one of those gray rocks, and listened to that prayer! We would forever after be ashamed of our *prayerless prayers*. Up, up my Christian friends; shake off sloth; working for God is good, and giving to God is good, but none of these will avail much without

the closet prayer of faith. God will allow you to come very near, and use great familiarity, if you only fully trust his word. Yea, he says, "Command ye me!"

"Faith, bold faith, the promise sees,
And trusts to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities,
And says, 'It shall be done.'"

Elijah goes by the command of God to the brook Cherith, a quiet retreat, where he is to remain till events ripen for farther action. His drink is to be the little stream that rolls babbling over its pebbly bed, and ravens are to supply his food. Well supplied are those that God supplies. Their bread shall be given, their water sure. Their gracious Provider tells them not to be anxious, for while engaged in his work, he undoubtedly will supply their wants. Indeed, his promise is pledged to that effect, and all undue care is dishonor done to his word.

Dr. Krümmacher, speaking on this event in the life of Elijah, relates the following beautiful illustration:

"This God still liveth, a living Savior, who is always to be found of them that seek him, and is nigh unto them that call unto him. Mighty hosts are encamped about his servants, and when he saith 'Come,' they come, or 'Go,' they go. And there has been no end to his wonderful providence, even to the present day. What else was it, but the Lord God of Elijah, who, but a short time since, in our very midst, so kindly delivered a poor man out of his distress—not, indeed, by a raven, but by a poor little fugitive singing bird? You are all well acquainted with the circumstances. The poor man was sitting at his front door, early in the morning, his eyes red with weeping, and his heart crying to heaven, for he was expecting an officer, that very day, to come and sell his property for a small debt, which he could not pay. While sitting thus, with a heavy heart, a little bird flew through the street, fluttering up and down, as if in distress, until at length, quick as an arrow, it flew over the good man's head into his cottage, and

perched itself upon an empty cupboard. The good man, little imagining who had sent him the bird, closed the door, caught the bird, and put it in a cage, where it immediately began to sing very sweetly, and it seemed to him as if it were singing the tune of a favorite hymn, viz.: "Fear thou not when darkness reigns," and as he listened to it he found himself much soothed and comforted by its melody.

"Suddenly a knock is heard at the door. 'Ah, it is the officer,' thought the poor man, and arose to open it with fear and trembling. But no, it was the servant of a very respectable lady. He said that the neighbors had seen a bird fly into his house, and he wished to know if he had caught it. 'Oh, yes,' answered the poor man, 'and here it is.' In a few minutes the servant returned, and said: 'You have done my mistress a great service, for she sets a high value upon this bird. She is much obliged to you, and requests you to accept this trifle, with her thanks." The poor man received it thankfully, and it proved to be neither MORE NOR LESS THAN THE VERY SUM FOR WHICH HE WAS SUED.

"Soon after, the officer came; the poor man handed him the money, saying, '*Here is your money, God hath sent it; now leave me in peace!*'"

Happy they who have a firm trust in this God and his controlling Providence. In great peace shall they possess their souls. Their best Friend sits at the helm of affairs, and guides in such a way that all things shall work for their good. We remember the story of the distinguished man, who, unable to proceed in his journey on account of a storm, was groaning in great mental distress, and unable to sleep. His pious servant said, "Master, do you not believe that God governed this world very well before you came into it?" "Yes," was the reply. "And do you not believe that he will govern it very well after you leave it? "I have no doubt of it." "Then, master, can you not believe that he will govern it all right while you are in it?" To this he made no reply, but shortly after turned over and went to sleep.

More than two years have passed, and, according to the word of Elijah, the drouth continues; and great distress begins to prevail in the guilty land. Even the brook Cherith has dried up, and, by Divine direction, the prophet has gone to reside with a widow of Sarepta, whose little store failed not while he remained in her house. But on these matters we cannot dwell at length. The time for action has come, and Elijah shows himself to the king. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" is the angry greeting of Ahab. The prophet boldly replies, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Balaam." He demands from the king an opportunity to meet the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, in the presence of the people; that imposture might be exposed, and the truth of God vindicated. This righteous demand Ahab could not refuse, and messengers are sent in all directions to assemble the people.

The appointed day has come, and the expected thousands begin to assemble. The four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and the same number of the priests of the grove, are all there. The mountain is covered with an eager and excited crowd, and great results, both for time and eternity, hang upon the decisions of that day. The crowd, we can suppose, are beginning to grow impatient, when, in the outskirts of the throng, there is an excitement seen. It is the wicked king, who, in great pomp and grandeur, has just arrived. The multitude of idolaters lift up a shout of welcome that seems to smite against the very heavens, while old Carmel seems to frown down upon their wicked contempt of the true God.

Again the crowd becomes quiet under the hush of a general expectation. They are waiting for Elijah, and the question is, Will he come? Some there, no doubt, are hoping that he has shrunk back from the trying ordeal; but there he comes, across the valley of Jezreel, with slow and solemn step, and the calm dignity of faith in God enthroned upon his brow. He loses no time, but with flashing eye, and tones of thrilling earnestness, says, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the

Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." He pauses, but there is no reply. The royal lips are sealed and the false priests are confounded. He then proposes a fair and equitable arrangement of the sacrifices, saying, "The God that answereth by fire, let him be the God." To which the people all shouted, "It is well spoken."

And now came a moment of great anxiety. The priests of Baal began calling upon their God, "O Baal, hear us!" And the poor fanatics shouted, and danced, and made the most frantic efforts around the sacrifice; but no sign was given, no fire from heaven came. Elijah had stood quietly by watching their antics, but he now steps forward, and in words of scathing irony, said, "Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." And haggard, bleeding, and mortified, these deceivers of the people retire from the spot. God's true servant now approaches, and to put the direct interposition of God beyond all doubt, he fills four barrels of water and pours them on the wood and the sacrifice; commands this to be done a second and a third time, till all is drenched with water, and the trenches are filled. Then lifting his eyes to heaven he utters an earnest prayer, and fire came down from heaven and burneth all up, as if it had been chaff in a furnace. With a shout that resounded among the mountain peaks and caves, the people fell upon their faces, crying, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord he is the God." These wicked priests, the deceivers of souls, are slain according to the word of the Lord, and the truth is vindicated before all the people.

Idolatry in such a gross form as we see it here is disgusting to us; but all loving of earthly things instead of God is idolatry. Our houses, our farms, our business, and our children, may all become our idols, by having that place in our hearts which God himself should occupy. We severely censure these Hebrews for departing from the living God, but in so doing we are only condemning ourselves.

Let us imitate Elijah, and be zealous for the true worship of the Lord. He has written the great truths of salvation in the Bible, and by his Spirit written them again upon our hearts; and we ought to be bold in their defence. We are encompassed on every side with the enemies of truth, and so should contend earnestly for the faith of the gospel. Even when religion is at a low ebb, its friends seemingly few, and its enemies many, then is the time to speak out for God, not in a corner nor in a whisper, but in the face of the multitude, and in tones loud and emphatic. We can see, in the case of the prophet, what good one bold, earnest man can do when animated by the right spirit. Such men are the true patriots to their country, the true benefactors of their race. They avert the awful judgments of God, and bring down imperishable blessings by their powerful prayers.

Let us be co-workers with God in the work of making our sin-cursed world better. The hand that moves the stars is working for man's elevation. That heart which makes all hearts pulsate feels the highest interest in the salvation of souls; and although his eye takes in at a glance the whole of his glorious works, there is nothing he loves so well to see as the humble and contrite heart turned toward himself.

Sinner! Take care that you do not die in the halt between two opinions. Are you sometimes almost persuaded to be wholly for Christ? Do not hesitate and vacillate any longer; but now take the Lord for your portion forever.

But we must return to the course of the prophet. After such a display of God's power and goodness on that mount, we would suppose that he would go on, his faith waxing stronger and stronger But alas! this is not so. When the Queen Jezebel hears of what has happened, she is filled with rage and hate against the man of God. He is seized with a sudden panic and flees for his life. The courageous prophet of yesterday becomes a trembling coward to-day. What a poor, changeable, unreliable creature is man, if not found leaning on Divine strength. He ought to have known that he was

only safe when doing God's work, and that to cast himself out of the path of duty, is to cast himself into the worst danger. But he flees into the wilderness and sits down under a juniper tree, full of doubts and fears and despondency. He sleeps, and after partaking of food miraculously provided, he journeys on to Mount Horeb.

Here he takes up his abode in a cave, very likely the very same in which Moses once found a refuge. There in that desert grandeur, and amid its awful solitude, he wraps his prophet's mantle around him, and lies down on the hard ground as his bed, congratulating himself on his safety. All at once he is startled by a voice: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" How that question must have confounded him. No work to do there, no mission of love to souls to accomplish there; but plenty of great, noble work to do, from which he had fled. The question was three times repeated, and like as we all do, when he had no good reason to give for his conduct, he presented an excuse. "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

How patiently and condescendingly the Lord dealt with his erring child. He bids him come forth and stand upon the summit of old Horeb, around the hoary brow of which cluster such immortal remembrances. There the Lord passes before him in a representation full of terror and full of meaning. First there is a mighty wind that rends the rocks and tears up the trees by the roots and casts all things on the surface into a wild confusion. This is followed by an earthquake that comes rumbling and grumbling through the mountain, and extorting many a groan from its flinty bosom. But look! the whole mountain seems on fire, forked flames leaping from point to point, bursting through every fissure and threatening the prophet with instant destruction. But in none of these agents of terrible power did God show himself to Elijah. Hark! he hears a voice, still and small, sweet in its tones of love, and he

knew that God was in that voice. His Lord had not come to destroy, but to save, not in wrath but in love.

To every wandering child of God the question comes, "What dost thou here?" If in wicked and worldly society to do them good, or in the discharge of some plain duty, then we can expect God's protection; but if we run into danger or go to worldly society from choice, as Peter did, then we are in great spiritual peril. To those who go into scenes of sinful dissipation and amusement, God says, "What dost thou here?" When Peter was in the company where he denied his Lord, one of them put to him that searching question, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" How he must have felt these words, for the garden was connected with most solemn and impressive remembrances. So when professing Christians go to the giddy ball-room, to the theater, to places of fashionable resort where God is openly dishonored, they may be asked, "Did not I see thee at the communion-table with him? or at the prayer-meeting, or making a public profession of your love to him, and recording your vows forever to be his?"

And nothing can restore the wandering soul, but the still small voice that comes from Calvary. The whirlwind may produce a surface change, a mere outward movement; the earthquake may go deeper and reveal the inward evils that lay under the mere exterior; and the fire may alarm and terrify, but the power of God to salvation is only in the Cross. It is the still small voice which says, "It is finished," which, pleading for the guiltiest of the guilty, says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And if the sweet, melting love that beams forth from that hallowed spot, does not lift us up to God, purifying our hearts and making us new creatures, then we are lost indeed.

Elijah returns from Horeb by the wilderness of Damascus, and to his great joy he finds that there are seven thousand faithful souls in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. In our seasons of depression we are apt to view things through the false medium of our own dark conceptions. God has ever kept a seed to serve him. In obscurity, in retirement, scarcely

known to the world, nor wanting to be known, he has those who love him with pure hearts fervently, and had rather die than dishonor his cause.

Elijah comes back to his work with renewed courage. He found Ahab and his queen still engaged in their wicked practices. To gain possession of a coveted vineyard he has murdered Naboth, and is going down in great state to take possession of his ill-gotten gain. All at once he sees a man approaching him with a steady step and stern look. Had the murdered man appeared before him in his bloody shroud he could not have been more startled, for he sees that it is the prophet of God, and he knowing that he comes with the rebuke of the Lord upon his lips. Fixing his eye upon the king, he said, "Hast thou killed and taken possession? in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall they lick thy blood, even thine." With scowling brow but guilty fear in every feature, he says to the prophet, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy!" "I have found thee," was the laconic, but terrible reply.

The scene when Elijah opens the windows of heaven by his fervent prayers, is most graphic and highly instructive. At first there is but a little cloud like a man's hand, but he pleads on with faith encouraged and strengthened by this sign. The cloud increases till it curtains the whole heavens in darkness, and then breaks in teeming showers upon the parched and burning earth. All nature quickens into life under the heaven-sent blessing, and as streams of water leap from rock to rock, and roll down the mountains and fill up the rivers and brooks, the beds of which had so long been dry, who does not see that God is the hearer of prayer. So God, in answer to prayer, still pours out refreshing showers of spiritual blessings upon his people. John Livington, of Scotland, called a number of his brethren around him and proposed that they should spend a whole night in prayer for a blessing on the preaching of the gospel; and the very next day five hundred were converted In like manner a number of Christians in Enfield, Massachusetts, spent a whole night in prayer just before President Edwards preached that awful sermon, "Sinners in the hands of

ELIJAH CASTING HIS MANTLE ON ELISHA.

an angry God," under which great numbers were converted. It is well known how greatly blessed that school of the prophets, at Hamilton, New York, has been. It was founded in prayer and in every strait its founders called upon God. In the life of Dr. Nathaniel Kendrick the following fact is stated: "The meetings of the board, particularly in the early history of the seminary, often presented scenes of deep and moving interest. They were not so much seasons for the dry discussion of business as of prayer, inasmuch as from their great extremity they were driven to ask counsel of God and implore deliverance from embarrassment through his interposition. At one meeting in 1826, most of the time was spent in earnest prayer and strong crying to God for direction. The board felt the need of a suitable edifice to accommodate the growing school, and besides, it was in a great measure destitute of funds to aid those whom they had received as beneficiaries. At the meeting now referred to, the only vote passed was one appointing a day of fasting and prayer, some weeks from that session. It was a dark hour, but just the darkness that precedes the cheerful light of day. For those prayers were taking effect. They disturbed the sleep of Mr. Nicholas Brown, of Providence, Rhode Island, and he dreamed nightly about Hamilton. And so he came to his pastor, Dr. Gano, and said, 'They are in trouble at Hamilton, I think, for I can't sleep nights; my dreams about them disturb me. Do you know their condition?' Upon being told that he was ignorant of their exact condition, Mr. Brown said, 'You must go and see;' and upon this Dr. Gano made the journey to Hamilton, at Mr. Brown's expense, and finding out their great distress, and reporting it to Mr. Brown, he at once sent them one thousand dollars, which relieved their perplexity."

Those who honor God he delights to honor. Elijah had long stood a bold and fearless defender of the right; fighting right manfully the battles of the Lord. And now his heavenly Master wants him home, and is going to take him in a triumphant chariot of fire. He is informed of his coming glory, and we can form no idea of the hallowed joy which he must

have carried about in his soul as he walked about among his fellow-men—in the world but not of it. His last visit is paid to the school of the prophets, for he could not but feel a deep interest in those who are to stand up for truth and righteousness when he is gone. God's ministers are never so taken up with their future blessedness as to forget the interests of that loved Zion for which they have labored and wept and prayed, and nothing can please them better than to see good, faithful men of prayer and faith coming forward to take their places, and to grasp the standard that is falling from their failing and trembling hands.

So great were the thoughts that came crowding upon the mind of the prophet at this moment that he wished to be alone; but his faithful friend Elisha, knowing what was to occur, would not leave him. His soul clung to his Master the more closely as the last moment of parting approached. Our privileges are more valued as they are about to take their departure; and, no doubt, he wished to catch his friend's last words and his parting blessing. See these two good men journeying on together, the one soon to be in glory, the other about to begin a career of great usefulness. Fifty of the sons of the prophets stand at the distance to view the expected translation. The miraculous events of the Bible were not done in secret. Our Lord's miracles were all performed in the open day, and for the most part before great numbers. He showed himself after his resurrection to five hundred brethren at once, and breathing upon his followers his parting blessing, he was taken up into heaven before many witnesses.

Elijah is not to die in the way appointed to other men; but he must pass over Jordan before he mounts his chariot of fire. The stroke of his mantle parts the waters, and now, turning to his friend, he says, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee." He did not tell him to ask for something when he was a glorified saint in heaven; no, he was to ask now, for nowhere does God encourage petitions to be made to the redeemed in glory. "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." O happy man! to have in his heart

such a wise wish—such a holy choice. Wealth will perish, honors die away, and fame is but a puff of breath; but a holy disposition comes from God, and, like its source, can never die. We are to covet earnestly the best gifts; those which will make us the most holy and the most useful. If such is our choice to-day, our Heavenly Father says, "Ask what ye will, and itshall be done unto you." According to our faith are our gifts in regard to spiritual things.

Elijah confessed the difficulty of answering such a request, and said that its being granted was to depend upon one condition: "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be." We are told that this holy man was going on talking when, all at once, the heavenly chariot came for him. When he got the intimation that he was soon to leave earth, he did not retire to some cell or cave of the earth, but went on until the last moment attending to the ordinary duties of life. Let us seek so to live that when the Master sends for us we may be found about His business.

Elisha sees the ascension of his friend and cried out, "My Father, my Father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" He rends his garments as a token of his sorrow; for though the event was gain to his old Master, it was a great loss to him and to the church of God; heaven was richer but earth was poorer by the departure of such a good man. In this ascension the mantle of Elijah falls to the earth. It is not taken and laid up in the school of the prophets, to be venerated and worshiped as a holy relic. Such things can only be done when true, intelligent piety gives place to superstition. He casts it about him, and sad and solitary he journeys on to begin the great work to which he has been called and set apart.

The whole history of Elijah shows how God honors his dear servants. Down to the last hour of their national existence, the Jews felt the holy influence of this good man. In no period of the world's history has the Lord left himself without faithful witnesses, and when one is taken away to his glorious home another comes forth with heavenly credentials to prove that he is the sent of God.

After centuries had passed away with this good man in heaven, he was permitted to visit our earth. He had seen our adorable Redeemer leave his throne in glory to come to earth to lay down his life for sinners; and when the time drew near for the tragic scenes of Calvary to transpire, he and Moses were permitted to meet our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. The leader and law-giver of Israel and one of the most distinguished among the prophets, are sent to pay their adoration to their Lord, in the presence of his disciples. In him both the law and the prophets find their fulfillment, and these holy visitors from the courts of glory joined with those on earth who were beginning to love him, to "Crown him Lord of all."

Here was a visit to earth made by glorified human beings. No doubt God employs them often on errands of love. Often may those that have been taken from us be near us when we know it not; and when the last hour of our earthly probation shall come, they will be among those who shall give a glad welcome to our liberated spirits to our eternal home.

But we must bid farewell to the prophet of Carmel. We part with him reluctantly, for the contemplation of his strong and noble character does us good. His is a life well worth recording. The most that can be said of a great majority of our race is, that they lived, that they were worse than useless, and that they died. But here was a life in earnest, a life dedicated to God, and useful through all time to men. The earth of our planet contains not his dust, but passing through some change it is glorified, like as the bodies of the saints shall be after their resurrection. How glorious to spend an eternity with such men! But O how much more glorious to see Him face to face who died for our offences!

"Though earth has full many a beautiful spot,
As a poet or painter might show,
Yet more lovely and beautiful, holy and bright,
To the hopes of the heart, and the spirit's glad sight,
Is the land that no mortal may know."

"There the crystaline stream bursting forth from the throne,
Flows on, and for ever will flow;
Its waves, as they roll, are with melody rife,
And its waters are sparkling with beauty and life,
In the land which no mortal may know.

"And there, on its margin, with leaves ever green,
With its fruits healing sickness and woe,
The fair Tree of Life, in its glory and pride,
Is fed by that deep, inexhaustible tide,
Of the land which no mortal may know.

"There, too, are the lost! whom we loved on this earth,
With whose mem'ries our bosoms yet glow;
Their relics we gave to the place of the dead,
But their glorified spirits before it have fled
To the land which no mortal may know.

"There the pale orb of night, and the fountain of day,
Nor beauty nor splendor bestow;
But the presence of HIM, the unchanging, I AM!
And the holy, the pure, the immaculate Lamb!
Light the land which no mortal may know.

"Oh! who but must pine, in this dark vale of tears,
From its clouds and its shadows to go?
To walk in the light of the glory above,
And to share in the peace, and the joy, and the love,
Of the land which no mortal may know."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ELISHA, THE PROPHET OF THE SUCCESSION.

That most devoted Christian, the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, when in a deeply distressed state of mind on account of his sins, said to his mother, "O that I had never been born! For two years I have been sorry God ever made me." Her noble reply was, "My son, you *are* born, and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for your conduct." God has a plan of our lives, and the noblest spirit we can cultivate is, to be a cheerful co-worker with God in all his holy purposes and designs, and in the darkest hour to believe that he is leading us in the right way. Fletcher said, "I have been forced by many disappointments to look for comfort in nothing but in the comprehensive words, '*Thy will be done.*' A few more trials will convince you experimentally of the heavenly balm they contain to sweeten the pains and heal the wounds that crosses and afflictions may cause."

When the heavenly call came to Elisha, it found him at the plough; and leaving all his worldly entanglements, he followed the divine direction, till now we find him the honored successor of the translated prophet. When great men are removed from the church we are ready to feel as if the cause of God had sustained an irreparable loss. But God knows the end from the beginning; and though he takes the most useful of his servants away, yet he sees to it that his own cause shall not suffer for want of agents to carry it on. It is true that it is a solemn event when God's faithful servants are taken away We feel as if the bulwarks of the church were torn away, and as if the wild waves of error could now roll in with impunity. But God is in the midst of his church, and

she shall not be moved. Their holy example, their fervent prayers, their wise counsels, are greatly missed; but their work is taken up by others, to whom a kindred spirit is given, and the cause of truth stands secure as the throne of God.

When God called, and inspired his prophets and apostles he did not disturb or change their natural talents, or the peculiarities of temperament and disposition, which constituted their individuality among men. On the contrary, he uses these for his own glory and the edification of his people. Moses was naturally meek and sagacious; Isaiah, full of poetic fire; Peter, all zeal and impetuosity; John, gentle and loving; and Paul, logical and intellectual; and so they were all unlike to each other in some respects, and yet alike in having the same spirit, and working to the accomplishment of the same object. Luther and Melancthon were no more alike than is the violet and the rose, yet they both ornamented the garden of the Lord. Carey and Judson, were very different, yet their hearts both burned with missionary zeal. So with Elijah and Elisha; there was a wonderful unity in their lives, and yet a marked individuality distinguished each.

"Distinct as the billows, yet one as the sea."

The new prophet has much hard work before him; for Israel is now in a dark and wicked state. The corrupt king Ahab is dead; but his wife, equally corrupt and with more force of character, is still alive. False gods are still worshiped, while "darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people." Elisha goes to Jericho, to the school of the prophets, to wait for further manifestations of his Lord's will. We must both wait and work, in God's service. They who wait, renew their strength, and so are more fit for their work. The fisherman is not always engaged in catching fish, but must sometimes be employed in mending his nets. And so must it be with fishers of men. Even the temporary residence of a good man in a place is a blessing to it. The inhabitants of the city came to the prophet, and represented that they had one great draw-back to the prosperity of the place—the water

was bad. Josephus mentions a spring at this place that was injurious to health, and made the trees and the fruits of the earth decay.

Elisha at once listens to the petition of the people to heal their waters. Our most common mercies are the most important, but this truth is only recognized when they are taken from us. By a direct miracle the waters were rendered healthful and pleasant. He thus took an early opportunity, in a public and influential manner, to show his credentials as one sent of God. The whole Bible is founded on miracle, and all the attempts of men to explain these on natural principles are utterly silly and absurd. On this subject a clear reasoner, Dr. Uhlhorn, says:

"Miracles cannot be got out of the Bible, either by natural explanation or by figurative interpretation. Nor is it of any use to abate something here and there, to set aside this or that miracle entirely, or to conceive its miraculous quality to be less miraculous, for the least miracle is as incomprehensible as the greatest. In vain, also, is the attempt to disjoin the miracles; to separate them as *debris*, and to hold fast only what remains, for all Christianity rests fundamentally upon the miracle of the appearance of Christ; and whoever rejects miracles must also reject the fundamental fact of Christianity, the chief article of the Christian faith. Nor is this all; he must reject all revelation, for revelation is miracle. And if he then, perhaps, comforts himself with the thought that natural religion still remains, this consolation also rests fundamentally upon illusion. To speak plainly, whoever denies miracles has no God. He may always, if only from an instinctive fear of atheism, hold fast that there is a God, but it is a dead word, a name, for this God stands in no living relation to the world. Man has nothing to hope or to fear from him. Prayer is no longer possible, for all praying depends upon the conviction that God grants what we ask. If God performs no miracles, and can perform none; or, in other words, if he no longer acts in this world, if he is shut out of it, if the order of nature does not admit him, if everything that takes place is nothing

but an unbroken chain of final causes and effects—then prayer depends upon an illusion; and the illusion must sooner or later become evident to man, shrink as he may from this conclusion of his reason."

"I would therefore ask you not to shrink from a clear perception of the whole scope and bearing of this question, from the beginning to the end. Strauss is perfectly right in treating the question of miracles as the question of the existence of Christianity. He who does away with miracles not only banishes, as Strauss says, the priests from the Church; he banishes the Church itself, and Christianity, and the living God, besides."

Mercy and judgment are blended together in God's ways, and so must they be in the actions of his prophets, and the teaching of his ministers. Elisha had just performed a miracle of great mercy to a whole city, but now we are to see the flashing of the sword of Divine justice. While on his way to Mount Carmel, he had to go through Bethel, a place rendered memorable by the vision which Jacob had there. It is now a wicked and profane place, where the altars of the true God are thrown down, and where idol worship abounds. As soon as the man of God came in view of the place, there came out a large number of wicked youths, in our translation rendered little children. The word, however, is used in reference to young men, or persons grown up. Very likely they were sent out by the idolatrous priests to insult the prophet.

These profane youths began to shout, "Go up, thou bald head! Go up thou bald head!" No doubt by the phrase, "Go up," they referred to the translation of Elijah, and thus showing their hatred of both the prophets. The blighting curse of God fell upon them there and then; and forty-two of them were torn by two she bears that came out of the woods. Let this teach young people to stand in awe and sin not. God will avenge any disrespect shown to his aged servants, and, sooner or later, all contempt displayed to the religion of heaven, through its professors, will recoil upon the heads of those who manifest it. In this case the parents were as

guilty as their children. They had trained them up in ignorance of the true God, and had set them an example of mocking at sacred things.

Alas! even among professing Christians there is too little respect shown to God's servants in the presence of the young. How often will some peculiarity of person or manner, some weakness of God's ministers, be made a subject of ridicule or rude jest in the presence of the children; and that, too, just after returning from the house of prayer. Need they wonder if these young people get into the habit of scoffing at all ministers; and to mock at the messenger of truth is the sure way to learn to mock the message itself? Let such remember that God will not be mocked, and that as they sow so will they reap. They have sowed in laughs and mockery at holy things, and so God says that he will "laugh at their calamities, and mock when their fear cometh."

But we must pass to several events in the life of this good man, in which the power of God was shown to be with him. Traveling about in the Lord's work, he one day entered Shunem. There dwelt a woman of wealth, and of a kind and hospitable heart. She urged him to make her house his home, which proposal is accepted, and "as oft as he passed by he turned in thither to eat bread." This good woman projected a plan for making him still more comfortable, and, consulting with her husband about it, "a prophet's chamber" was built on the wall; and there he found a quiet resting-place and a spot for uninterrupted communion with God.

All this kindness on the part of this family excited the prophet's gratitude; and that Lord who takes notice of even a cup of water when given to his people from a right motive, did not let their kindness pass without its reward. This couple had lived long together, but, as yet, their home had not echoed the glad voice of childhood's prattle. They were childless. God, in answer to the prophet's prayer, sends them a lovely boy, and we can easily imagine how their fond hearts would cling around him. The whole aspect of their home is

changed, and he grows up under their loving care, a happy and dutiful boy.

But, alas! he is soon taken from them. Being out with his father in the field one day, he is seized by the cold hand of death. Perhaps that very morning his mother had gazed upon him proudly, and thought of what a prop he would be to her declining years; but before noon she looks upon his pale face, on which death has stamped his seal.

How does this fond mother act under this crushing blow? Does she give way to that wild and clamorous grief that murmurs against God? No, far from it. She hastens to Mount Carmel to tell her sorrows to Elisha, and, in reply to his question, "Is it well with the child?" she answered, "It is well." Sweetly meek and submissive under this severe trial, she looks up through her tears into the face of her Heavenly Father, and said, "It is well." She dreads to return to her home, for its chief joy has gone out in darkness, but *it is well.* That bright eye which always met the kindred glance of her own love is closed in death, but *it is well.* Silent now is the tongue that spoke to her such loving words, and cold now are the lips that kissed her so fondly, but *it is well.* Oh woman, great is thy faith! From thy bright example may we learn to trust God when we cannot see him, and to say, in the wildest storm that beats upon us, "*It is well.*"

Is is, doubtless, a sore affliction to a mother when her babe is torn from her bosom. Through her fast falling tears she says:

"One little bud adorned my bower,
And shed sweet fragrance round;
It grew in beauty every hour,
Till, ah! the spoiler came in power,
And crushed it to the ground."

But, tenderly as a mother loves, he who has taken the dear one loves it still more. Yes, afflicted mother, your babe is in safe hands. Your Lord will take good care of it for you; and if you are one of Christ's redeemed ones, you will find your darling again, so bright and so loving, and so happy that you

will be compelled to acknowledge that your Friend above did all things well. To a weeping mother, standing over the little dead body of her babe, a good minister said, "Your child will have two Fathers in heaven, but only one mother." So you see it is not lost to you. It is yours still, and will be yours forever.

To those who have children in heaven, let it lend a new attraction to that bright world for you. Dr. Payson, I believe it was, who said that he thought more of heaven since his wife had gone to be a citizen of the golden city. Many a mother takes a deep interest in some far distant land, that before she cared not for, because her son or daughter now lives there. It is a great privilege to have a child in glory, singing God's high praise. But do not miss the way, and make the parting an eternal one. Put your hand into that of your adorable Savior, and he will lead you safely in through the golden gate, to go no more out forever.

But, to proceed with our narrative; the prophet goes to the house of mourning with the sad woman, prays over the dead child, and gives him alive once more to the now joyful mother. O, how blessed to the people of God will be the day when the same power that wrought this change shall raise from the dead those who sleep in Jesus, and death-divided friends shall meet, not only in spirit but in the body, and be for ever with each other and with the Lord. Then, even in the flesh, shall we see the Lord.

Naaman's cure of leprosy by Elisha is full of instruction and interest. When read in the light of the Cross of Christ, it is full of gospel truth. As I have dwelt at length upon this incident in my book called "Grace and Truth," I will now only refer to a few points not there spoken of at any great length. In some of Naaman's invasions of war he had carried away a number of captives out of the land of Israel. Among them was a little maid whom he gave to his wife to wait upon her. As an old writer says, "A small chink may serve to let in much light," and so this little maid brings a great blessing, both temporal and spiritual, to that house. A great wrong had

been done her, she had been torn away from nome and dear friends, and perhaps some very dear to her had been slain by the conqueror; yet, instead of sitting down in sullen despair and brooding over her wrongs, she seeks to return good for evil, and tells her mistress of the man of God in Israel who could cure her husband of his loathsome disease.

There is work in this world for every child of God to do. The fields are white to harvest, and the weakest and the feeblest can gather in a little for the Lord. One can give time to the work of making the world better, while another can give money. One can employ the ready pen, another the eloquent tongue, and a third the prayer of faith. The great thing is, to have "a mind to work" for Jesus. If we have the love of Jesus in our hearts, that will make us ingenious in finding out plans to promote his glory. To speak a word to some one whom you have influence with, to send a tract to some one in a letter, following it with much prayer, and to set an example such as all can see who honor the Lord, are means of doing good open to all.

Naaman hears the words of the little maid concerning the man of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and faith at once brings forth works. So with great pomp and much display of his greatness, he comes to Elisha. In one thing he fails. He is not disposed to take the blessing of a cure from God in the humble way it is offered. He must have the blessing in his way, not in God's way. His way is to pay for it; God's way, to give it for nothing. His way is for the man of God to come to him, go through some splendid and impressive ceremonies, and then a cure be effected, God's way was that the prophet was not to see him at all, to perform no rites, nor ceremonies, but simply to tell him to dip his diseased body seven times in Jordan. God would not bow to his plan, and he would not bow to God's; and so, in a rage, he was about to carry his disease back with him, had he not repented, that is, changed his mind.

It is the old story over again, as old as the fall of man. Man wants to pay a price for his salvation. He wants to put

forms and rites and stately performances in the place of the worship of the heart. The religion of form is the religion of fallen humanity. We need not wonder at the great popularity of ritualism in the present day. It will come to this by and by, that nearly all who are not in Christ by a living faith will have a religion of form, and the more gorgeous and pompous the form, the more fashionable it will be. This is so clearly illustrated in the following little narrative that my readers will be pleased that I quote it:

"Alice was an only child, an heiress. Lovely and accomplished, she lived for this world, and this world offered her no ordinary attractions. Idolized by her parents, and beloved by an accepted suitor, she knew not the meaning of a wish ungratified.

"But an unexpected visitor arrived at the mansion. A pale messenger came to Alice. A hectic flush suffused her beautiful face rendering it, if possible, more lovely still. The eagle eye of affection soon perceived that the seeds of consumption had been laid. The skilled physician pronounced the heart-rending verdict that her days were numbered and self-indulgence would soon close.

"Alice sank by degrees, and as she lay on her couch, surrounded with all the luxuries that wealth could procure, began to think how sad it was to leave her loving friends and all her brilliant prospects, and to go —where? where?

"She could not find an answer satisfactory to her soul.

"So she sent for the High Church clergyman. He came. The family were assembled. He produced a missal. They all knelt around the bed. He intoned the service for the sick. Having received her confession, and pronounced absolution, he, with peculiar genuflexions, administered the sacrament, and placing his hands on her, blessed her, and pronounced her a good child of the Church. He departed, perfectly satisfied with his own performances, and assuring the parents that all was right.

"Was Alice satisfied?

"She had submitted to all. She had endeavored to join in the service, but in her immortal soul she felt a blank.

"'Father,' said she, 'I am going to die. Where am I going?'

"The father gave no reply.

"'Mother, darling, can you tell me what I am to do to get to heaven?'

"No reply, save tears.

"'William, you who were to be the guide of my life, can you tell me anything of the future?'

"No response.

"'I'm lost! lost!' she exclaimed. 'Am I not, father? Is there any one who can tell me what I must do to be saved?'

"At length the father spoke.

"'My child, you have always been a dutiful daughter, and have never grieved your parents. You have regularly attended the Abbey Church and helped in its services, and the minister has performed the rights of the Church and expressed himself satisfied with your state.'

"'Alas! father, I feel that is not enough. It is no rest to my soul. It is hollow—it is not real. Oh! I am going to die, and I know not where I am going. Oh! the blackness of the darkness! Can no one tell me what I can do to be saved?'

"Blank despair was pictured on her countenance. Misery overshadowed the circle. They were overtaken by a real danger. Death was in their midst. Eternity was looming before them. They knew not how to answer the appeal of an immortal soul, awakened to a sense of sin—to a dread of appearing before God—to the terror of hell.

"Alice was attended by a little maid, who was in the habit of frequenting a meeting held in a barn in the village, where prayer and praise were offered up in simplicity, and where they sang the old hymns:

> "There is a fountain filled with blood,
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
> And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
> Lose all their guilty stains;"

and

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursèd load;"

and where she heard words which reminded her of the good old pastor.

"She longed to tell her mistress that she might 'wash and be clean,' but felt diffident. At last she took courage, and just as the Israelitish captive said unto Naaman's wife, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy,' she told her mistress, 'There is a preacher in the village who proclaims salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and urges us to accept the forgiveness freely offered in the gospel.'

"'Oh that I could see him!' exclaimed the dying girl.

"Alice besought her father to invite the strange preacher to the house; and though he thought it extraordinary, her wish was law.

"Again the family were assembled, and the man of God entered the room. The dying girl, raising herself, appealed to him; 'Can you tell me what I must do to obtain rest for my soul, and die at peace with God?'

"'I fear I cannot.'

"Alice fell back. 'Alas!' said she, 'and is it so? Is there no hope for me?'

"'Stay,' said he, 'though I cannot tell you what you can do to be saved, I *can* tell you what *has been done* for you.

"'Jesus Christ, the Savior God, has completely finished a work by which lost and helpless sinners may be righteously saved. God, who is love, saw us in our lost and ruined state. He pitied us, and in love and compassion sent Jesus to die for us. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' He shed his precious blood on the accursed tree, in the stead and place of sinners, that they might be pardoned and saved. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

"'And I have nothing to do?'

"'Nothing, but to believe. No doing, working, praying, giving, or abstaining, can give relief to a conscience burdened with a sense of guilt, or rest to the troubled heart. It is not a work done *in* you by *yourself*, but a work done *for* you by *another*, long, long ago. Jesus has completed the work of our redemption. He has said, 'It is finished.' Through faith in him you have pardon. It is impossible for a sinner to do ought to save himself. It is impossible to add anything to the perfect work of Christ. *Doing* is not God's way of salvation, but ceasing from doing, and believe what God in Christ *has already done for you*. 'God has given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son.'

"'I do believe that Jesus died on the cross for sinners; but how am I to know that God has accepted *me?*'

"'Jesus, the God-man, has ascended into heaven. He has presented his blood before God, and has been accepted for us; and when you believe, you are accepted in him.'

"The awakened sinner listened with breathless attention. She received the word of God, which revealed Christ to her soul. The glad tidings fell as a balm upon her wounded spirit. Her face was lit up with heaven's sunlight. Looking upwards, she exclaimed, 'Oh, what love! what grace!

'Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.'

And in a few days she departed to be with Christ.'"

Naaman, listening to better counsel than his own prejudices and national pride, and so in obeying the word of the Lord, went home cured in body, and with his soul filled with a clear conception of the Great Jehovah, and determined to worship him only.

An incident here occurred, that is so full of warning and instruction, that we must not pass it by in silence. Gehazi was a servant of Elisha, and, it has been supposed, was with Elijah in the same capacity. Gratitude for his cure, led Naaman to press upon the prophet the acceptance of a very liberal present. His wish was to impress upon the mind of

this distinguished heathen, that the gifts of God can not be bought, that all was of free grace, and his reply to the generous offer was, "As the Lord liveth, I will accept none."

Then it was that the wicked thought of enriching himself by a lie occurred to the mind of Gehazi. He thought that it was too bad that this rich man should carry back all this wealth to his own country. If his master had false scruples about receiving a gift, he had none; and acting on the wicked impulse, he runs after the carriage of Naaman, and, under a false representation, obtains the desire of his heart.

Ah! how little do we know our own weakness till the day of trial comes. We think ourselves strong, fortified by a good reputation built up steadily by a life time of moral integrity; and if any man were to suggest a departure from the straight line of honesty, we would indignantly exclaim, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But when the unexpected hour of trial comes, the very thing is done the mention of which was so repulsive. That stream seems very bright and clear; you would not think that there is a great deal of mud and impurity lying at the bottom, till something occurs to stir it up, and then we are astonished to find a filthy puddle instead of a pure, sparkling stream.

Gehazi carries his gains into the tower, or secret place, and having hid it securely away, puts on a look, as if nothing had occurred, and boldly goes into the presence of the prophet. Little did he think that all was already known, and that his sin had found him out. Elisha calmly rebukes him, and pronounces his punishment, which was, that the loathsome disease of Naaman should cleave to him all his days. Ah! how empty his gains would seem now. He had been thinking himself rich; perhaps, in imagination, picturing to himself the things he would buy, and in the style in which he would live. But now, with his health gone, his character gone, all enjoyment in life gone, a disgraced and ruined man, he slunk away from the society of men; carrying with him the conviction that all this misery he had pulled down on his own head.

We see that we may fall into sin, while possessing the very

best religious privileges. The means of grace and the grace of the means are very different. This man dwelt in the household of this holy man, saw his godly life and heard his fervent prayers; and yet, was not made better by either. So Judas enjoyed our Lord's ministry, and saw his holy example, and yet was lost. And it is worthy of notice that both those men were ruined by the same sin, the sin of covetousness. "They that will be rich, fall into temptations and a snare, and many hurtful lusts that drown men in destruction and perdition."

But to return to the life of Elisha; that noble man goes on in his career of doing good on every hand. The sons of the prophets were enlarging the place of their abode, and to save one of them from distress, a miracle is wrought. The king of Syria was preparing ambuscades against Israel, but his designs are exposed by the prophet. This so enraged the king that he sends an armed host to apprehend him. His servant was much alarmed, and cried, "Alas! my master, how shall we do?" But the prophet was quite calm and serene in the midst of all the danger. His reply was, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He referred to a great multitude of angels with which they were encompassed, and which the young man's eyes were opened to see. If we could clearly see the means that God has taken for our protection how trifling would our outward and physical dangers seem. This host of armed men were stricken with blindness, so that the prophet led them to the king of Israel.

In the course of this book we see how much holy angels have to do with the affairs of men; and what a deep interest they have taken in the progress of our race. Called into existence before man, gifted with superior intellectual powers, and having no body of flesh to encumber them, they are capable of putting forth mighty efforts in carrying out God's will. Hence they are called "mighty angels," and are said to "excel in strength." Their home has been the highest heavens ever since their creation, and as they have been permitted to appear in the immediate presence of God, to behold his beauty, and to see his holy, wise and sovereign goodness, as

the ages have rolled away, we can form no conception of how great their knowledge of God must be. Sinlessly pure, they are able the better to comprehend the greatness of Jehovah, and so bow before him in profound humility.

We learn that the number of these holy ones is very great. "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." Our adorable Lord said that he could invoke to his aid, "More than twelve legions of angels;" and Paul speaks of them as "an innumerable company of angels." There seems to be different degrees of glory among them, as we read of "thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers." And the angels Michael and Gabriel are spoken of as leaders among the heavenly throng. But they all "do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word."

When the creating word called our world into existence, these holy beings sang forth their emotions of delight, yea shouted for joy, and all the way down the history of our planet, they have watched over the servants of the Lord, stimulating them to duty, and protecting them from dangers. The Psalmist tells us that they encamp around God-fearing people, for their deliverance; and that the Lord gives his angels charge over them. They have often been sent forth as ministers of destruction, as well as of mercy. They are never idle, for they not only praise God in strains to mortal ears unknown, but are quick as the flash of the lightning to go forth on his errands. These holy angels have taken a great interest in the plan of salvation. Though they need no Savior themselves, they rejoice in the love shown to us, in God's unspeakable gift. They announced our Lord's incarnation to Joseph and Mary; and to the shepherds told of his birth in songs of rapture, the echo of which still sounds around our globe, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Yea, God's command to the angels concerning his Son was, "Let all the angels of God worship him." And they did worship him, with all the power of their pure natures.

During the whole of our blessed Lord's sojourn on earth, these holy angels waited upon him. After his temptation in the

wilderness, after his agony in the garden, and on other occasions, angels ministered to him. It was one of them that rolled away the stone from the sepulchter, and when our Lord was taken up to glory, two shining ones appeared to the apostles, and told of his coming again to this earth.

These holy ones take a great interest in the spiritual well-being of Christians. They rejoice over their conversion; and in regard to young converts, our Lord says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And when Christians die, we learn from the case of Lazarus, that they carry their souls to their future glorious home.

And when the great day of judgment shall come, the angels shall be our Lord's attendants. Yea, they are to herald his approach, for Jesus says, "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." And it is evident that they are to have something to do in carrying out the sentence that is to be pronounced from the great white throne.

Have we reason to believe that these celestial beings are employed in the affairs of earth, as of old? I have no doubt of it. We may be assured that they are not idle, and surely this sin-cursed world is not now independent of their aid. It may suit the purposes of the poet to represent their agency in human affairs, as only a beautiful picture of the imagination, and to speak of their visits as "few and far between." But God's word represents them as constantly near us, interested in our movements, watching for our welfare, and often putting forth kind and active exertions for our good. If the veil could only be taken from our eyes, as in the case of Elisha's servant, we would be astonished at their numbers around us, and confounded at our own unbelief. Let us seek to imitate these holy beings in their steady obedience to the will of their Lord; and seek so to live in their presence and in the presence of their Lord, as we shall wish we had when we come to stand amid the realities of eternity.

We now come to near the closing scenes of Elisha's life. The inhabitants of Samaria, being besieged, were perishing by famine. The prophet predicted that day there would be a great plenty in the city. One of the courtiers ridiculed this assertion, and was told that he would see it, yet perish in the midst of the plenty. For upwards of sixty years from the time of his appointment to his high office, he went on to fulfill its high duties with untiring zeal. At last his release came. Among the weeping friends that stood around his death-bed was Joash, the king. Though not translated in the body, he had a triumphant entry into the heavenly kingdom.

Let us serve his Lord as he did, with zeal and fidelity. We may not be known far from our homes, but nothing honestly said or done for God can be lost. This is beautifully brought out by the following lines by Dr. Bonar:

"Up and away, like the dew of the morning,
Soaring from earth to its home in the sun,—
So let me steal away, gently and lovingly,
Only remembered by what I have done.

"My name and my place and my tomb, all forgotten,
The brief race of time well and patiently run,
So let me pass away, peacefully, silently,
Only remembered by what I have done.

"Gladly away from this toil would I hasten,
Up to the crown that for me has been won;
Unthought of by man in rewards or in praises,
Only remembered by what I have done.

"Up and away, like the odors of sunset,
That sweeten the twilight as darkness comes on,—
So be my life,—a thing felt but not noticed,
And I but remembered by what I have done.

"Yes, like the fragrance that wanders in freshness,
When the flowers that it came from are closed up and gone,—
So would I be to this world's weary dwellers,
Only remembered by what I have done.

"Needs there the praise of the love-written record,
The name and the epitaph graven on the stone?
The things we have lived for,—let them be our story,
We ourselves but remembered by what we have done.

"I need not be missed, if my life has been bearing
(As its summer and autumn moved silently on)
The bloom, and the fruit, and the seed of its season;
I shall still be remembered by what I have done.

"I need not be missed, if another succeed me,
To reap down those fields which in spring I have sown;
He who ploughed and who sowed is not missed by the reaper,
He is only remembered by what he has done.

"Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken,
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,
Shall pass on to ages,—all about me forgotten,
Save the truth I have spoken, the things I have done.

"So let my living be, so be my dying;
So let my name lie, unblazoned, unknown;
Upraised and unmissed, I shall still be remembered;
Yes,—but remembered by what I have done."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### DANIEL, THE PROPHET OF THE COURT.

Daniel was one of the children of the captivity. Isaiah had prophesied, "Thy sons shall be chamberlains in the palace of the King of Babylon," and little more than a century had passed when this prophecy was fulfilled. The people of Israel, with their king, nobles and priests were carried into captivity, and out of those of princely birth were chosen four to serve in the court of the king of Babylon. One of these was Daniel, a man who towers up before us, preëminent for the greatness of his soul—the grandeur of his moral nature.

As drawn before us by the pen of inspiration, he appears a faultless character. We do not mean to say that he was a sinless man, for he had to be saved by grace, like all that ever have been saved. But he stands up before the ages as they pass, a bright example of what God's grace can build up out of the ruins of our moral nature; a lofty, generous, pure and true man; anxious to live in love and peace with all, and yet firm as a rock, where any principle of right was involved; willing to obey those that had authority over him, and ready to conciliate his captors in every way consistent with truth and righteousness; but all the kings of the earth, and all the terrors that power can accumulate, could not make him swerve one hair's breadth from the obedience which he owed to the great King of kings. The fact that such a man lived in our world has proved a blessing to our common humanity, and his very name and example brings strength and comfort to the tempted and the tried.

It should be remembered that Daniel was quite young when brought into this heathenish court, not more than eighteen years; and this makes his noble resistance of wrong and his

bold stand for the right all the more wonderful. In order that he and his companions might be fit to appear before the king, according to oriental notions, they are to be taught the language of the Chaldeans, and to be put through a course of physical and intellectual training. It was usual for them during this training to eat of the meat and drink of the wine brought from the king's table, in order that they might appear ruddy. But Daniel wished to be faithful to the law of his God and the teachings of his fathers in regard to meats and drinks. He would not defile himself by indulging appetite at the expense of conscience. Some might call it bigotry and making a great deal of little things; but such people are in great danger of making great things little. When people get into the habit of sitting in judgment upon God's commands, and reject one because it is little, and choose another because it is great, they will soon set up their own judgment as the standard of right and wrong in all things. "He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool." A thus saith the Lord, is to be our rule in everything.

Daniel obtained leave from the officer who had charge of their education, to use as the food and drink for himself and companions, only pulse and water; and so well did they thrive upon this that their appearance indicated better health and vigor than those who had been fed from the king's table. Hence, when brought up for examination, Daniel and his three companions were chosen to the high post of waiting upon the king's person.

Thus religion is profitable for both worlds, for this world and for the world to come. A strict compliance with the injunctions of the Bible is as good for the health of the body as for that of the soul. The fruit of the spirit is temperance, as well as other excellencies; and we are enjoined not to defile our bodies, from the high and solemn consideration that they are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We see in this young man the triumph of religious principle over the lusts of the flesh, a firm regard to God's will, even when the doing of that will is going to cost some sacrifice; and all this gives us an assur-

ance that his future life will be marked by the same spirit of unflinching trust in the right. Instead of daring to stand up for God and right, suppose that he had yielded to the custom of Babylon, that one false step would have led to others; and having begun to yield, he would have gone on till his pathway would have been that which leads to hell.

Those who honor God he delights to honor. The spirit of prophetic power came upon Daniel about this time; so that while he was being taught of men the duties of the court he was taught of heaven to read the mysteries of the future, and to draw before the eyes of men inspired pictures of things yet to be. God imparted to him such a spirit of wisdom that when brought into contrast with the wisdom of earth, was as much superior as the sun in his noon-day glory is to the glimmer of a rush-light. That Daniel was a true prophet of the Lord is evident from the fact that Jesus and the inspired apostles, speak of him as such; especially Paul refers to his predictions. He bears a clear testimony to Christ as the Messiah, the great work that he should do, and the blessed and glorious kingdom that he should set up.

At this time the kingdom of Babylon was the greatest among the nations of the world. All others had to acknowledge its greatness, and some of them had to bow to its supremacy and submit to be its slaves. All was prosperous so far as external observation could discern, when a strange restlessness—a fearful foreboding of coming evil began to oppress the spirit of the king, Nebuchadnezzar. Restlessly he tossed upon his bed, unable to find that sleep that came unsought to the poorest of his subjects. "His spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." When he did sleep a fearful vision of the night alarmed him. In the morning the dream was forgotten in its distinct outlines, though the horror it had caused still weighed down his soul. He sends for his astrologers and magicians, a class of imposters that they dignified with the title of wise men, and with promises of rich presents, commands them to tell him his dream and its interpretation. And to show the despotic character of the man, if they failed in this, their

DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS BEFORE NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

lives were to be forfeited. Of course, the wise men failed, and the tyrannical king was furious, and commanded them to be destroyed. Daniel, having learned these particulars, enters the king's presence and asks for time, that he may show the interpretation of the dream. This is granted, and gathering his three companions, they pour out their hearts in prayer for wisdom to be given from on high. Nor did they plead in vain. The secret is revealed to this young servant of God, and he hastens to state his readiness for an interview.

The time has come, and the Jewish exile stands before the sovereign of a great empire; the king unhappy in the midst of his riches and luxuries, but the poor captive happy in his God. He is at great pains to impress upon the king that no honor is due to him, but all the glory is God's, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." The monarch is all solemn attention, for part by part the vision of the night is reproduced, and then the interpretation is given with all faithfulness and fidelity. We can not go into the whole of this striking vision, at present; but there is one part that demands attention. It is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, first breaking the image into pieces, and then increasing until it fills the whole earth. Daniel's words are: "Forasmuch as thou sawest this stone, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

This stone is no doubt the kingdom of Christ, hewn out of the quarry of our poor sunken, sinful human nature, without hands, that is, not by the power of man, but by the power of God. This kingdom is composed of holy spiritual subjects, who take Christ as their king, and who depend upon his gracious promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. The kingdoms of this world may rise and fall, and the kings that reigned over them may strut their little hour, and,

puffed up with a lofty conception of themselves and their power, look coldly, it may be contemptuously, on the cause of Christ; but as the winds of the coming winter sweep the dead leaves before them, so kingdoms and kings that once filled the earth with their fame have been swept into a common grave; but Christ's kingdom goes on conquering and to conquer. Ridicule and contempt, proscription and persecution, the flashes of genius and the ravings of vulgar blasphemy, have all been tried against this kingdom; but it not only stands unshaken, but hastens to fill the whole earth with its glory.

The king was much impressed with Daniel's interpretation, recognizing not only his wisdom, but fell down before the Eternal God, saying, "Of a truth, your God is a God of Gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets." He confered many honors upon Daniel, and made him ruler of the province of Babylon. This last honor he asked might be confered upon his three companions instead of himself; which was done. By this means the condition of the Jewish captives was rendered more comfortable. When men of true piety are in power the people have reason to rejoice; but when power and wickedness are united the people mourn. Only suppose that Satan had unlimited power for one day, and what a hell our world would become!

To trust in an arm of flesh is sure to bring disappointment; and if history has taught us one lesson more emphatically than another, it is the unreliableness of the favor of kings. "If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king," said a disappointed statesman, "he would not forsake me now." How strange that men will put confidence in the word of their fellow men, and yet speak as if the faith that saves the soul, which is just taking God at his word, was a very difficult thing. This is beautifully illustrated in the following:

"It was a time of some spiritual awakening in a small manufacturing town. The foreman in a department of one of the factories became anxious about his soul. He was directed to Christ as the sinner's only refuge by many, and by his own master among the rest; but it seems to be without result. At

last his master thought of reaching his mind and bringing him to see the sincerity of God in the gospel by writing a note, asking him to come and see him at six o'clock, after he left 'the work.'

"He came promptly, with the letter in his hand. When ushered into the room his master inquired, 'Do you wish to see me, James?'

"James was confounded, and holding up the note requesting him to come, said, 'The letter! the letter!'

"'Oh,' said his master, 'I see you believed that I wanted to see you. When I sent you the message you came at once.'

"'Surely, sir! surely sir!' replied James.

"'Well, see, here is another letter sending for you, by one equally in earnest,' said his master, holding up a slip of paper with some texts of scripture written on it.

'James took the paper and began to read slowly, 'Come—unto—me—all—ye—that—labor,' etc. His lips quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and, like to choke with emotion, he thrust his hand into his jacket pocket, grasped his large red handkerchief, with which he covered his face, and then he stood for a few moments, not knowing what to do. At length he inquired:

"'Am I just to believe that in the same way I believe your letter?'

"'Just in the same way,' rejoined the master. 'If we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater.'

"This expedient was owned of God in setting James at liberty. He was a happy believer that very night, and has continued to go on his way rejoicing in God his Savior, to point others to Calvary, and walk in the narrow way."

A few years had passed, during which time the arms of Nebuchadnezzar had been quite successful. This so filled his heart with pride that he forgot all his fair promises to Daniel, and returned to idol worship with increased zeal and bigotry. He took the spoils that he had obtained in his wars and made a golden image, setting it up in the plain of Dura, and commanding all the rulers and the people to worship it, on pain of

death. This image was about three-score cubits, that is about ninety feet, in height; and six cubits, or about nine feet, in breadth. A proclamation was issued calling upon "the princes, the governors and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces," not only to attend the dedication of this image, but at the sound of the musical instruments mentioned, to bow down and worship it. Should any refuse to do this, they were in the same hour to be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

The appointed day has come and the great assembly is convened, when it is reported to the king that the three Hebrews whom he had appointed over the province of Babylon had refused to worship his image; these were Daniel's companions, named Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In a towering rage the tyrant calls them before him, repeats his decree, and tells them the punishment that must follow disobedience to his will. They answer respectfully, but firmly, "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." At this the king commanded the furnace to be heated seven times more than it was wont, and that these men, with their clothes upon them, should be cast into the flames.

Now comes the time of exciting trial. There is the great king surrounded by his flatterers, the officers of his government, and his victorious army. And yet his power is defied by these three children of God. Religion is a matter purely between God and the conscience of man, and never do human governments make themselves more contemptible than when they undertake to dictate what man shall believe and how he shall worship. It is a good man's duty to obey the laws of the government under which he lives, as far as these laws do not interfere with the duty he owes to his God; but the moment that they do this, he is bound to obey God rather than man. This is the principle upon which good men have acted in every age of the world. Men might crush their bodies with torture, their affections with imprisonment, and

their good name with infamous charges, but they could not crush out of them the determination to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, enlightened by the word of truth.

The furnace is flaming at its highest pitch, and into it are cast these Hebrew exiles. So furious are the flames that the very men who were the instruments of the tyrant's will, in casting them into the furnace, are burned to death. But, see! astonishment and alarm gather upon the face of the king. Gazing into the furnace for some time, he turns to his attendants and says, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" "True, O king!" was the reply. He then told them that he saw four men walking unhurt in the midst of the fire, and that one of them is like the Son of God. Yes, blessed Savior, thou hast never left thy dear people alone in their troubles! Prisons and dens and caves of the earth have been illuminated by the light of thy countenance; and thou hast made sick beds and beds of flame easy as a bed of down to thy dying saints and martyrs.

We can conceive with what a feeling of shame and remorse the king uttered these words: "Ye servants of the Most High God, come forth." They did so, showing themselves unhurt, before the whole multitude, not even the smell of fire upon their garments. This miracle must have produced a great change in public opinion. We hear no more of the great golden image, nor the universal worship which it was to receive. But the king publishes a decree, that any one speaking a word against the God of these three men should be cut in pieces, "Because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

Now, he had a right to exalt the name of Jehovah above idols, and to do all he could to glorify his name, but he had no right to use his power to compel people to think as he did. He had no more right to kill men for not worshiping the God of heaven than he had to kill them for not worshiping his idol. How hard it has been, in every age, for men in power to understand the true doctrine of religious liberty. Hence, whenever

the state has taken even true religion under her protection and patronage, a spirit of intolerance begins to show itself, very injurious to the cause of Christ. Secular governments should not interfere in religion any further than to see that all have the liberty to worship God according to their consciences.

In these three Hebrews we see a fine example of true decision of character. Christian decision is always exercised with a special reference to God's holy will. Mere natural decision is a man adhering to a course that is marked out by his own will. Such men often pursue a course without any regard to its being right or wrong, but only because they have resolved upon it. The Christian is firm and resolved, because God has spoken. In matters of small moment, where God has given no direct intimation of his will, it is our duty to yield. In this we can be all things to all men, like Paul, to gain men into a right spirit of peace and love; but in regard to things important in religion, and all is important that God has commanded, the Christian is to be firm and unyielding

Christian firmness does not trouble itself much about consequences. It does not ask what will people think of me if I do this, or what effect will it have upon my business if I do that. It asks only, is it God's will? and if so, it must be done. This gives a oneness and a uniformity to the good man's course. You know where to find him. He is not one thing to-day and another to-morrow. He is reliable, for he acts from a fixed and unchangeable rule; that is, the will of God that changes never.

Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, which filled him with terror. The vision was that of a great tree growing in the midst of the earth, towering up to the heavens, and its branches stretching to the ends of the earth. In it the fowls of the air dwelt, and under it the beasts of the field found shelter. But "a watcher, even a holy one," approaches the tree, and in a loud voice cries, "Hew down this tree, cut off its branches, shake off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from its branches; only leave its stump in the earth, bound about with iron and brass."

Daniel is sent for to interpret as before. The matter filled him with astonishment, and "his thoughts troubled him," we are told. He faithfully told the king that the fall of this great tree was emblematic of his own downfall. That by insanity he was to be driven from the abodes of men and made to herd with the beasts of the field; that this state of things would continue for seven years; and he urged the proud monarch to repentance, and to turn to the Lord by works meet for repentance. But worldly prosperity had completely hardened his heart. It made him feel independent of God.

An English magazine tells us that the butchers of London have great difficulty in driving a flock of sheep through the crowded streets. They are apt to get scattered in all directions. To avoid this they take a sheep that has been petted till it loves its owner, and has got so used to the crowded streets that it will go after him anywhere. This one is used as a decoy to a whole flock. The owner puts it at the head of the flock that he wants to take to the slaughter-house, and they follow it to their destruction. Thus Satan has many decoys to lead souls to hell, and one of the most common and successful of these is the love of the world. A little more, and then they are going to be satisfied; but the satisfaction never comes; instead thereof comes an awful hardness of heart, a proud, dark contempt of everything sacred, the harbinger of eternal death.

About a year after the king had been warned by the vision and by Daniel, he was walking in his palace and thinking of all his vast power and the greatness of his kingdom, when he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" The proud boast has scarcely left his lips till a voice from heaven told him that God's predicted time of judgment had come, and in a moment he becomes as a beast. For seven years he lives in this degraded condition, when his reason was again restored to him, and looking up in humility to the great God of heaven, and acknowledging his hand in the whole matter, he was again restored to his throne. By public proclama-

tion he owned his guilt, and the great goodness of God in his restoration. At last he died, and his grandson, Belshazzar, ascended the throne in his stead.

The terrible judgments that were sent to his grandfather had no effect upon him; for he entered upon a career of idolatry, blasphemy and licentiousness that makes us truly thankful that his reign was a short one. He had been defeated in battle by Cyrus, and for two years had been besieged in Babylon. Defended by massive walls and bulwarks, by gates of brass and the great river Euphrates, and having provisions enough to last for twenty years, he feared neither God nor man, but gave himself up to the gratification of his lusts.

One night be made a feast, conducted with all the oriental display that he could command. He gathered around his festal board a thousand of his lords, with his wives and concubines, and the grandees of his great empire. All that could administer to the lust of the flesh was there. The wine excited them to madness, and a roar of mirth and revelry went forth from the excited throng. The king ordered the vessels of gold and silver, which his grandfather had taken from God's house at Jerusalem, to be brought out that he and his drunken crew might drink out of them to the honor of their vile gods. It was a fearful act of sacrilege, for these vessels had been consecrated to the service of the great God, and had often been used by holy men in his worship; and now to be used by these wicked wretches in their abominable orgies, was an insult to the Most High.

But see! All at once the king turns pale and trembles in excessive terror. The excited laugh of the drunkard has died away upon his lips, and left his heart quaking under a horror, all the more dreadful that it is undefined. He starts from his seat and fixes his eyes in a wild stare upon the wall. All are now filled with dread, and their eyes following that of the king see the hand of an invisible being writing some mysterious words upon the wall: "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN," were the words, and it was in vain that the magi were called, for they could not explain them. The king's consternation

THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN.

increasing, the queen, supposed to be his mother, remembers Daniel, and urges his being sent for.

We can imagine the holy man of God coming into that hall and looking solemnly around on the wicked throng. The king offers him rich rewards, but he is there, not to please kings and nobles, not to be bought, but to speak God's truth. Accordingly, with a quiet dignity he says, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." He then goes on to tell the king what God had done for Nebuchadnezzar, from which he had taken no warning; and in most emphatic terms to rebuke his great wickedness. It is not often that royal ears listen to such a sermon. He then interpreted the words to mean, that his kingdom and reign was at an end, that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

That very night the city was taken. Two deserters told Cyrus how it might be taken; that by drying up the waters of the Euphrates, that ran beneath the powerful walls of the city, an entrance could be accomplished and the city secured by surprise. This was done, the king slain, and his kingdom divided.

Darius now reigned in Babylon, and proceeded to make new arrangements in regard to the government. Daniel was at once exalted to a position of great honor and power. This was done because the king saw that "an excellent spirit was in him." But this very eminence to which he was lifted up, made him an object of envy and hatred to some. The more holy and upright he was, the more such vile men would hate him. They were maddened with rage to think that they could not find something on which to found a complaint against him, to the king. Unable to find anything against him in regard to his moral character, or the discharge of his civil duties, they turned to his religion. This is very instructive. After watching him closely, their keen espionage being sharpened by intense hatred, they could not find a single act or word or event in his life, that could be charged as wrong. The only thing that they could charge against him was that he was a praying man—praying three times a day to the God of heaven!

A plan for Daniel's destruction is now formed. A concourse of his enemies assemble at the palace, and ask the king to pass a decree according to the law of the Medes and Persians.

This decree was to be to the effect, that for thirty days no person in the whole realm should ask anything of either God or man, except of Darius, the king; and any violation of this absurd decree was to be punished by the offender being cast into the den of lions. It is to be presumed that the king did not for a moment suppose that this would, in any way affect Daniel to his injury; and as it was flattering to his pride, it was at once sent forth in due form. We see them come forth with the smirk of unholy triumph upon their faces. They chuckle among themselves, and congratulate each other upon their success in having the man they hate now in their power. Ah! little did these wicked presidents and princes think that at that very time they were digging a pit for their own destruction.

Daniel hears of what has been done, but heeds it not. He goes calmly about his duties as before, and when the hour for his accustomed devotion arrives he goes up to his house and prays as usual, with his face toward Jerusalem. He knew that his enemies were watching for evil; but along with that assurance was another, that the God of the universe was watching him for good. It may be thought by some that as God can hear prayer anywhere, he might have gone into a secret place, where all evidence of his violation of the decree that had been passed would have been wanting; but this would have been acting on a false expediency. No kings, nor princes, nor presidents had a right to come between him and his God—to dictate when he should or should not pray; and he goes on as if no such dictation had been attempted. What a noble, God-like character! He stands up before us a bright example for all ages, of a bold Christian consistency; and of what it is to trust God, when every other trust has failed.

"So should we live that every hour
May die as dies the natural flowe-
A self-reviving thing of power;

"That every thought and every deed
May hold within itself the seed
Of future good and future need."

The enemies of the prophet hastened again to the palace to accuse him to the king. He had prayed to the God of heaven, they said, and thus set at defiance the monarch's authority. The king now all at once began to see the snare that had been set, and, greatly vexed with himself, he tried to discover some way by which the prophet could be saved; but by the inflexible nature of the law this was not possible. Daniel is, therefore, cast into the den of lions, and a stone is placed at the mouth of the den, with the royal seal upon it.

There he remains during the whole night; in all likelihood the happiest night of his life. Oh, what thoughts of God's great goodness he must have had when he saw those wild animals crouching at his feet! That heavenly Friend, who had showered down blessings all along his pathway through life, had now given such manifest tokens of his love, that his whole soul must have overflowed with a peace that could make even a lion's den the gate of heaven. Not only had he the presence of God during that memorable night, but the companionship of holy angels also; and he enjoyed a happiness to which the greatest and richest of his enemies were altogether strangers.

The king, who had spent a restless night, hastens to the lion's den at the dawn of day, and cries, "Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

The voice of the prophet was at once heard in reply, "O king, live forever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." The king was rejoiced exceedingly that the incorruptible statesman, who had served him so well, was still alive; and, although Daniel had presented no complaint against those who had treated him so wickedly, yet the same destruction which they had prepared

for him came upon themselves, they were devoured by the wild beasts.

Here we have another instance of the power of the prayer of faith. Such prayer is always answered; while that prayer that is mingled with distrust and doubt, receives nothing. Our blessed Lord sets this in so clear a light that his words should be engraven upon our hearts. 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' And again, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." These passages seem very plain; and yet when Mr. Müller, and a few others like him, act as if these words were to be taken as literally true, the Christian world looks astonished, and speaks as if a mistake had been made in some way. No, there is no mistake in taking God at his word, and that faith that does so, he honors now as much as he did in the days of Daniel.

Who can read the ninth chapter of the book that is called by this prophet's name without seeing that he was a man mighty in prayer? We find that he had given himself up to study the prophecies of Jeremiah in regard to the close of the captivity. He saw that that time was at hand, and by fasting and deep humiliation before God, he betakes himself to prayer. And O, such a prayer! We seem to see his tears of penitence, and to hear his sighs and his groans poured forth from his earnest heart, as he pleaded for himself and the ancient people of the Lord. Such confession of sin, such laying open of the soul, in all its vileness, before the eye of Infinite purity; such a broken-hearted melting of the soul, in awe before the great and dreadful God, makes us ashamed of what we have called our prayers. And then, such terrible earnestness, such fervent importunity as we have in this prayer! We seem to see him getting nearer God every cry that breaks from his agonizing soul, till he feels that he has prevailed. "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive: O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thy own sake." We feel that this is not mere repeating of words, but that every cry of the soul is a new victory of faith. And, sweeping from the heavens, comes the angel Gabriel, to tell him that his prayer is answered.

Of the prophecies of this man "greatly beloved of God," we cannot now speak. They are full of the coming Messiah, and in images the most sublime and glorious, tell of the time when his kingdom of love shall triumph over all opposition. Of the time and the place of his death we know nothing. He has long been a bright, happy spirit in glory; but his influence is still very mighty on earth. His life is a fit study for young and old. A noble statesman, an invincible patriot, an undaunted hero, a mighty prevailer in prayer, a prophet, great in the sight of God and man; we feel our hearts glow at the mention of his name; and it adds to the attractions of heaven, that he is there, and that we shall join him in praising God and the Lamb for ever.

"The king was on his throne,
The satraps thronged the hall;
A thousand bright lamps shone
O'er that high festival.
A thousand cups of gold,
In Judah deemed divine—
Jehovah's vessels hold
The godless heathen's wine!

"In that same hour and hall,
The fingers of a hand
Came forth against the wall,
And wrote as if on sand:
The fingers of a man—
A solitary hand
Along the letters ran,
And traced them like a wand.

"The monarch saw, and shook,
And bade no more rejoice;
All bloodless waxed his look,
And tremulous his voice.
'Let the men of lore appear,
The wisest of the earth,
And expound the words of fear,
That mar our royal mirth.'

"Chaldea's seers are good,
But here they have no skill;
And the unknown letters stood,
Untold and awful still.
And Babel's men of age
Are wise and deep in lore;
But now they were not sage,
They saw, but knew no more.

"A captive in the land,
A stranger and a youth,
He heard the king's command
He saw that writing's truth.
The lamps around were bright,
The prophecy in view;
He read it on that night—
The morrow proved it true.

"Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away,
He in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay.
The shroud, his robe of state,
His canopy, the stone,
The Mede is at his gate!
The Persian on his throne."

It has thus been our happy privilege to go over the most notable examples of faith recorded in the old Testament. As these noble men, of whom the world was not worthy, have passed in review before us, we should earnestly seek to have like precious faith with theirs. We may be encompassed with ten thousand trials; but if, like them, we only have faith and patience, we shall be brought through triumphantly. We shall meet in heaven those men of strong faith, and join with them in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled band
On the eternal shore."

One thing we can not but have noticed, in the course of our meditations upon these holy men, faith enabled them to see God everywhere. They did not long go groping around the world in darkness and despondency, crying, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Faith found him, through the blood of their sacrifices, pointing to Calvary, and knew him to be a God of Love. To such faith the whole world was full of God. As they walked by the side of the murmuring streams and sheltered themselves in the caves of the mountains and heard the rush of the wind through the swaying, bowing pines, they heard the voice of Jehovah speaking to them in accents of love. Amid scenes of prosperity and sweet domestic endearments, they found their highest enjoyments in God; or, when exiles from home and country, they wandered in dreary deserts, or sat on the banks of strange rivers, with songs dying away into sighs and groans; yet God was their refuge and their strength.

Reader, do you find God everywhere, in this way? In the dark, dense, solemn forest, or in the rush of the city, where the sound of sin and suffering, of business and selfish clamor, never dies by night nor by day; can you be still and know your God? Do you walk with God, in a loving, cheerful, willing way, as the loving child does with its father, feeling its highest joy in his approving smile? If so, happy are ye, for you shall soon be with the sinless congregation above, and your faith be lost in the fullness of glorified vision.

Paul, in speaking of the good who have gone before us and set us an example, says, "Be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience inherit the promises." It was upon these promises that the ancient people of God lived. They are the pledges which Jehovah gave to them, and by faith in which they were sustained all through the wilderness. These promises are God's storehouse opened to his people, into which they can go, and get all their wants supplied. They are a rich treasury of blessings, and if we are poor, we may be enriched, for faith holds the key.

These promises are for this life and for the life to come.

To the guilty they offer pardon; to the soul struggling with indwelling guilt, they offer the cleansing of the precious blood of Jesus; to the weary and heavy-laden they offer rest in Jesus—the sweet repose of the spirit when sins are all forgiven; to the sorrowful they offer comfort, not such as the world gives, but real heart-ease, when the head is resting upon the bosom of Jesus. And then what a glorious prospect these promises open before us for the future! A victory over the last enemy, death; a home of eternal bliss, with all the company of the redeemed; a resurrection of the flesh from the darkness and corruption of the grave, while the body shall be made like unto Christ's glorified body; and then the word of approval, spoken before assembled worlds, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Such are the promises that the heroes of faith lived by and died by. As an old writer says, "They are high as heaven and wide as the sea." They take all in, none are excluded. They are not for the rich only, nor for the poor only, but they are for all. And oh, how sure and steadfast they are! Spoken by the God of truth, written in the blood of the covenant, sealed by the Holy Spirit, they are all yea and amen to the believer. The world's promises are vain; Satan's promises are plausible but deceitful; but God's promises are sure and steadfast. No contingency can occur that can interrupt the kindly flow of his loving intentions. His promises are the voluntary, spontaneous outcoming of his love; and hence they are spoken in words so gentle and loving.

No wonder that they are called "precious promises." God has scattered precious things through all his material works. Far away down ocean's bed, unseen by human eye, he has treasured up precious things; and away up to the very summits of the cloud-topped mountains, they are to be found. But it is in God's Word that the most precious things come to view. The most precious things of earth are perishable, but the things which the Bible reveals become more valuable through all eternity. Precious blood, precious faith, precious promises, and precious mansions, are among the fair portions God gives his people.

DANIEL INTERPRETING THE WRITING.

Now, those good men of whom we have been speaking are inheriting the promises. What they long looked for they now possess. They no longer look through a glass darkly, but see face to face. The things that they longed and earnestly looked for, they now enjoy. No longer tossed upon the stormy ocean of life, they are safe in the quiet harbor. The toils of the wilderness are all over, and they rest at home. Let this comfort us. We have the same help that they had—the same strength and comfort. They met death in all forms, but they feared no evil. That last enemy was turned into a friend—into great gain. They were not merely calm in their last moments, but cheerful; not only resigned, but joyful and triumphant. By faith let us see our blessed inheritance awaiting our arrival; and let the sight quicken our pace to glory. It is but a short step from a death-bed to a throne and a crown!

## CHAPTER XX.

### STEPHEN, THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

As it is appointed unto all to die, it is to us a matter of great moment to know how we may die well. This we can only learn at the Cross; and it is encouraging and strengthening to our faith to see those who have been there pass away from earth peaceful as the going down of a summer sun.

There is no death recorded in the Bible which, for moral sublimity, comes so near the death of our Lord as that of Stephen. Of course, there is no death really like that of Jesus. His life and his death stand alone; for even an infidel had to say, "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God." Only a short time after Jesus died for our offenses, Stephen, very nearly on the same spot, was called to lay down his life for the truth. Both in his life and with his lips he bore testimony to the truth and then sealed it with his blood. He was the first of the Christian Church that fell under the bloody hand of persecution, and thus had the honor of leading the van of that noble army who are now crowned with immortal blessedness in heaven. Striving against error and sin, they resisted unto blood, and rose unto fame eternal by suffering—conquered by dying.

Stephen was one of the first seven deacons ordained at Jerusalem. These were to be men of honest report, and full of the Holy Spirit, and with this description this good man fully agreed. At that time the church was in a most prosperous condition. With a zealous, holy, heaven-taught ministry, with a membership so spiritual and consistent that Jesus was not ashamed to call them brethren, and with a constant increase of young members glowing with love to Christ, the whole city was shaken by their moral power. Stephen stood in the front of the battle, dealing sturdy and vigorous blows to Satan's

kingdom; and, therefore, he soon became the object of the most rancorous hate and persecution. We are told that "full of faith and power, he did great wonders and miracles among the people." The enemies of God and of truth felt that this must not be allowed, and that something must be done to silence so able and zealous a preacher.

They sent their most able and subtle disputants to put him down by argument. This was just what he wanted, for when did truth ever fear to meet error in fair discussion? Christianity invites inquiry—courts the most rigid investigation; and the most sifting and severe tests that science and logic can apply, only leave her friends the better pleased with the results, the more satisfied with the heavenly origin of that religion to which they have, in confidence of faith, committed their souls. As we might expect, in this conflict Stephen came off triumphant. He spoke with a wisdom and a power that astonished and confounded the enemies of truth. They were baffled and defeated at every attempt, and with the bright sword of truth flashing about their heads, were driven from the field.

Now, had they been honest seekers after truth, this would have been the end of the matter; they would have acknowledged their error, with penitent hearts, and at once yielded themselves up to the guidance of the heavenly light that had been made to shine around them. But such was not their character. They were haters of God and of good men, and if the progress of the gospel can not be stopped in one way they will try another. Accordingly they betake themselves to the use of the vilest slanders and malicious misrepresentations, the chosen supports of every sinking cause. Vile wretches were hired to utter false accusations, and Stephen was dragged before the great council of the Sanhedrim that a show of justice might be gone through. "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God," said the false witnesses. In a court of justice the countenance of the accused is often looked upon to see if tokens of guilt or innocence can be distinguished there. At that moment Stephen's face would bear examination. It was neither inflamed with

passion nor pale with fear. There dwelt upon it a look of calm faith and undisturbed confidence in God; a look of meek, forgiving love united with inflexible firmness of purpose. It shone like an angel of God, as if the heaven he was so soon to be in, had sent out a few of its rays of glory to meet him on his way. The emotions of his happy soul illuminated his face, and give us some faint idea of what a glorified body will be.

When this good man stood forth in his own vindication, he appears a fine example of a faithful gospel minister. He is far more anxious to save their souls than to vindicate his own character. Some of those present might never hear the truth as it is in Jesus again, and he felt that he must speak out, even if his life should be the price of his faithfulness to their souls. Hence those strong, powerful, personal appeals to their hearts and consciences. There are some ministers who may be said to preach the truth, but it is in a very general way. It is true as far as it goes, but it has no application to the people sitting before the preacher. It is preached *before* them rather than *to* them. There is nothing of "thou art the man" about it. This was not the way that John the Baptist preached to Herod, or the way that Stephen preached to the people in that court house. Such preaching as his will produce some effect, either in the way of softening the heart or of hardening it. It will prove a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It will either kindle resentment in the sinner's heart against the preacher who rebuked those sins, set them at war with themselves or with the truth that smites the conscience.

In the case of Stephen's hearers, they were filled with rage against their best friend because he told them the truth. As he charged them with resisting the Holy Spirit, as murderers of the holy Savior, they were lashed into a tempest of fierce passion and resentment. With glaring eyes "they gnashed upon him with their teeth," like wild beasts of prey. From such a mob, furious with diabolical rage, the saint of God knew that he had nothing good to expect. With such he could no more reason than with a whirlwind. How does he deport

himself? Does he look to the council for protection and mercy? Or does he look around the hall to find some mode of escape? No; nothing of that kind. He looked steadfastly up to heaven; and from that look he gathered new vigor and strength for the great conflict in which he was engaged. It made him long to spring from earth into the bosom of his loving Savior. There is often embodied in a single look a world of meaning and the most powerful eloquence. We remember the look from our Lord's loving eye that sent Peter out weeping bitterly, his heart melted into contrition under a conviction of his base ingratitude. The look of Stephen was an appeal to his adorable Lord. It said, "here I am doing thy work, suffering for thy cause, leave me not to my own strength, O my Lord, or I will fail!"

What a glorious sight met his enraptured gaze, at that moment! No wonder that it fired and filled his soul with a divine transport. There lay revealed to his view the throne of Jehovah encircled with unspeakable glories; and there stood the Savior, bending upon him a look of deepest affection and of sympathy. Nor could he keep the knowledge of this blessed sight locked up in his own heart. "Behold," said he, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." Observe, he saw him *standing;* and yet it was said, "When he had by himself purged our sins, he *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high." And again, as an evidence that his work was accepted the Father said to him, "*Sit* on my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool." But when Jesus looked down and saw the dauntless Stephen defending his cause single-handed, in the midst of bloody-minded men, he *stood up* to receive and to welcome the soul of his dear suffering child. Like Joseph with his brethren, he could no longer refrain himself. Oh, who can tell with what intense interest the Prince of Martyrs stood and gazed upon him who was proving faithful unto death! Well might the martyr "rejoice in spirit" when he saw that Almighty gush of tenderness towards him. There he saw a Savior who more than died a thousand deaths for

him, and whose loving heart, longing to have him a sharer of his glory, parted the sky asunder, and made the way to heaven ready, ere he was ready to enter.

And now the madness of the mob has reached its height. Raging and roaring like the waves of the sea lashed by a furious tempest, they rushed upon Stephen. With faces all distorted by passion, they drag him out of the city, that they may stone him to death. The better to accomplish this bloody work they cast off their upper garments. And who is that young man that we see standing guard over that pile of clothing? He is not a direct actor in the murderous work of the hour, but he is giving his consent to it, and, to use his own words, is "exceeding mad" against the followers of the Lord Jesus. Had any one stepped up to him as he stood there, and, tapping him upon the shoulder, said, "Saul, you will soon be stoned yourself for the same cause for which that holy man is now laying down his life," he would have felt indignant at the imputation. But God's holy eye was upon him, and had chosen him to be a most distinguished preacher of his gospel, and at last to die for the truths he preached so faithfully.

But let us not lose sight of the blessed martyr. Hark to those savage howls of these wicked men, and see the shower of stones that thick and fast fall upon him. His body is bruised and bleeding, and, as an opening is for a moment made in the crowd, we see him with his eyes uplifted to heaven; and hark! what words are these he utters? Ah! he is praying for his murderers! What great things grace can do for our fallen humanity. Man by nature hates his enemies, and seeks to return blow for blow and curse for curse, to the very last hour of his life. But Stephen's words are, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." All who are Christ's own possess his spirit. They are like him in their longings and aspirations, and like him in their love to the souls of the vilest of our sin-cursed race. In our Lord's dying moments he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And now here is one of his dear servants dying, with the same spirit of forgiving love upon his lips, and only there because it has welled up from his heart.

But the dying saint uttered another prayer on this memorable occasion. Feeling that his work was done, and his permanent home very near, he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This is a plain evidence that he considered Christ a Divine Being, truly God, equal with the Father. We are told that Stephen was a good man, full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and yet, if the Divinity of Christ is not acknowledged, then he must have died an idolator. No truth is clearer in the Bible than that worship is only to be offered to God, and here this devoted and highly enlightened Christian, offers his last prayer to Jesus. This is a clear proof that while he took upon him the nature of man, he was at the same time God over all, blessed forever. Stephen paid the same homage to the Redeemer, in his last moments, which Jesus himself did to his Father, when he was departing from earth. And this fact reminds us of the words, "I and my Father are one."

The expression used in regard to the death of this good man is quite beautiful: "He fell asleep." He was dying a very painful death, his body bruised, his bones broken, his skull fractured, perhaps his face fearfully disfigured and covered with blood; and yet, when the soul escaped from this tortured body, the inspired penman said it was like going to sleep. What a happy thought! Just going to sleep as the weary child goes to sleep upon its mother's bosom; or, as the laboring man goes to sleep after the exhausting toils of the day and forgets them all in peaceful repose. The sleep of the pious, with God's ever wakeful eye keeping watch over them, according to the words, "He giveth his beloved sleep." So the dead in Christ, as far as their bodies are concerned, sleep under the watch-care of God, and at the fit time shall wake to immortal beauty and glory.

"Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep—
A calm and undisturbed repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes.

"Asleep in Jesus! Oh, for me
May such a blissful refuge be;
Securely shall my ashes lie,
And wait the summons from on high."

The thought that God knows the time, the place, and the manner of his death, is a very happy one to the believer in Jesus. None of these things are to happen by chance, but in accordance with a plan in the Divine Mind. Whether we are to die alone in the silent watches of the night, or with many loving and sympathizing friends around us; whether our death shall be sudden, as in the case of the startling accident, that quick as the flash of lightning rends the body to pieces, and lets the soul escape; or whether with slow and stealthy footsteps, the work of years, disease shall lay us among the dead; all is known to and planned by our best Friend; one who loves us, and will surely do us no harm. Whether our body is to lie in the crowded city, or under the waving grass of the lonely country graveyard, or in that grandest of cemeteries, the vast ocean, with the furious dash of the mountain waves singing our requiem; all shall be well, for even our dust shall be precious in His sight.

Stephen's death, then, was a very happy one, notwithstanding the violence that attended it. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and that made him calm and self-possessed. He could look an awful death quietly in the face. His soul rested at anchor on the untroubled sea of God's promises. He was confident of victory. His blessed Lord still lived, and that thought made him sure that he should live also. He would not be in glory and leave him behind. There are many who think that to be filled with the Spirit, to have a high state of religious enjoyment, and to be fervent in spirit, must be a state of high wrought excitement; but I do not think so. Look at Stephen. Calm, cool, deliberate, bold and fearless; not at all excited though he knew that he was preaching his last sermon. The nature of true religion is to make the soul calm and sweetly peaceful even when the pillars of the earth seem to be shaking. It was Socrates that used to say, "Philosophers can be happy without music," and so Christians can be happy when the world's smiles are withdrawn; when it frowns and hates; yes, even when its curses and its blows fall fast upon their heads.

Another thing worthy of notice is, though Jesus was well pleased with his servant and deeply sympathized with him, he did not prevent the stones from wounding and killing him. He had power to do so; but that is not his plan under this dispensation. He does not promise to prevent his people suffering, but only to comfort and support them under their troubles, and to make them result in their present and eternal good. They are sustained inwardly with a joy that lifts them far above the world and all its sorrows. That city did not that day contain so happy a man, as he who was dying the object of the popular rage and hatred. He was conquering when he fell; he really began to live when he died; and the last stone that did its bloody work and ended his earthly life opened the gates of glory to him.

We come now to notice the estimation in which Stephen was held by good men. "Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." It is when we have buried our friends that we begin to feel the greatness of the loss that we have sustained. While the body is yet with us and we can go to the room where it lies and gaze upon the familiar features, it is hard to realize that the dear one is really gone. There is the constant visits of dear friends with their loving attempts to divert our minds from the great sorrow, and there is the excitement attending the preparation for the funeral. But when we have taken our last look and imprinted our kiss upon the brow of our dead; when the coffin is lowered into the grave, and we go back to our lonely and desolate home; when the vacant chair, the empty bed, the books that the loved one used to read, and many little things, as we wander through the house, tell us that the object of our affection is really gone to return no more; then comes upon us the bitterest hour of our bereavement.

To the mourners the home seems so sad, under these circumstances, that they go often to the grave to weep there. But that is a poor place to go to look for comfort. It tells us that we live in a sinful world, that our race is a fallen race. Yes, the first grave that was dug in our world was sin's monu-

ment; and yet, Jesus brings light even out of this darkness, for he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." "I will ransom thee from the power of the grave."

We are also told that holy and devout men were the mourners for Stephen. This was true honor. To be the favorites of vile and wicked men, to have our names honored and applauded by the children of the wicked one, is a disgrace rather than an honor. Such are the persons who, before Pilate, voted to have the murderer rather than the blessed Lord Jesus given to them. But to have the love andprayers and good wishes of pious people when we live, and their tears when we die, is a high honor indeed. The good opinion of such is worth something. It is next to the favor of their Heavenly Master, whose sentence of approval at last will shut all scoffing mouths; for "who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect."

These Godly men made great lamentation for their departed brother. Their burning tears fell upon his grave, when they reflected upon his noble, unselfish friendship. They did not doubt for a moment that to him death was a great gain, but to the church his departure was a great loss. They could, from their whole souls, utter the prayer, "Help, Lord, for the Godly man ceaseth." Good men are the hope of the world. Let all such be taken away, and the salt being taken away, the world would become a mass of moral pollution. Only think of the whole world of the impenitent being alone in one place, without God, without churches, without a prayer being offered, as the years rolled on! Dr. Macleod, of Scotland, puts this thought in a striking form: "Let the fairest star be selected, like a beautiful island in the vast and shoreless sea of the azure heavens, as the future home of the criminals from the earth, and let them possess whatever they most love, and all that it is *possible* for God to bestow; let them be endowed with undying bodies, and with minds which shall forever retain their intellectual powers; let no Savior ever press his claims upon them, no God reveal himself to them, no Sabbath ever dawn upon them, no saint ever live among them, no prayer

ever be heard within their borders; but let society exist there forever, smitten only by the leprosy of hatred to God, and with utter selfishness as its all-prevailing and eternal purpose—then, as sure as the law of righteousness exists, on which rests the throne of God and the government of the universe, a society so constituted must work out for itself a hell of solitary and bitter suffering, to which there is no limit except the capacity of a finite nature! Alas! the spirit that is without love to its God or to its neighbor, is already possessed by a power which must at last create for its own self-torment a worm that will never die, and a fire that can never more be quenched."

From the conduct of primitive Christians in regard to the death of Stephen, we may learn that it is not wrong to mourn when our friends are taken from us. We see this also in the example of our adorable Lord at the grave of his personal friend: "Jesus wept." It is wrong to murmur, to fret and complain against the providences of God. Our grief must run in a channel which submission to God has dug. We must reverently adore his sovereignty, and be still and know that he is God. And all this may be consistent with the keenest sorrow. When our Father takes away our loved ones he expects that we will feel the bereavement. If we did not, the effective stroke would do us no good. Our tears are a testimony borne to the value of the gift which God bestowed upon us, and of the intense longing of our souls to meet our loved ones again in heaven.

It should be our aim so to live that we will be missed and regretted when we die. There are some who so live that their departure from earth is a matter of joy, rather than of sorrow. Their example was corrupting, and when they are dead we feel as if a plague was stayed. When death came they were not willing to go, but nearly all their neighbors were willing. It is true the loss of their souls is a cause of great mourning, but as all hope of their ever being better had died out, the longer they live the more mischief they do; and so when their day of grace ends, God takes them away and shuts them up

where they can do no more harm. But the holy, devoted, working Christian is useful here while he lives, and when he dies he is only promoted to higher service in heaven. Though never weary of Christ's work here he is often weary *in* it. Bodily infirmities make him feel so, and a view of the evils of his own heart makes him long to go home. He often says:

"Savior, I come to Thee,
A weary child with pain and care oppressed;
Ah, let me lean this aching, burning heart
Upon Thy loving breast!"

There are some important lessons that we may learn from the narrative we have been considering.

First, let ministers learn to depend more on the influence of the Holy Spirit. Here was a man filled with that influence, and with what power and energy he spoke. It was not a prepared sermon, and yet how fitly adapted to the circumstances and to the hearers is every word. The spirit enabled him to collect his thoughts, gave vigor to his memory so that the very facts he wished to use all came to his mind at the right time and made his words flow forth with burning power. Of course, a minister should study faithfully the Word of God, and do all that he can to prepare for his solemn work; but if all that he can do in that way makes him feel less dependent upon the Holy One, his preparation will be a curse rather than a blessing. If our dependence is on our manuscript, or upon every word being committed to memory, then it is only a solemn mockery for us to pray for the Holy Spirit to help us. We should study with all the power that God has given us, and yet honor the spirit by constantly watching for his instruction and guidance.

I was greatly interested lately in reading the experience of a minister in regard to his style of preaching. He had in the early part of his ministry given his chief attention to rhetorical and poetical forms of expression in the preparation of his sermons. His vanity was well pleased when he heard himself extolled as a young man of brilliant talents, and saw his church crowded with that class of novelty seekers who are ever run-

ning after something new. But no souls were being saved, and believers were not being spiritually fed and built up in their holy faith. His wife, who was a holy, prayerful woman, and much displeased with the state of things existing in the church, said to him one day, "My dear, I am afraid you are making more admirers of yourself than followers of Jesus." This remark not being well received, she took the matter to the Lord in earnest prayer. Let the result be told in his own words.

"It pleased the Lord to hear that prayer of my excellent wife. One Sunday morning I preached as usual to a crowded congregation, chiefly composed of the principal inhabitants of the neighborhood. I was just then engaged in giving my audience a picturesque description of a sunset on the sea of Galilee, when all of a sudden, owing to the close atmosphere, a little girl fell into a fainting fit. The disturbance which it created, though only short and comparatively insignificant, yet so much put me out that I became altogether confused. The rest of my sermon vanished from my memory. I could not possibly recollect one word of it. In my perplexity I cried to God for help. While looking down on my Bible, which was lying open before me, my eyes fell upon the text of Peter, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever." Yielding, as it were, to an instinctive impulse, I read it to my hearers and began preaching from it an improvised sermon, just as it came up in my heart. And here, having lost my oratorical flower-basket, I could not help laying bare the truths of God's Word in all their simplicity and startling reality. Connecting the text with my previous description, I called the glory of man a setting sun, but which was never to rise again. I spoke of the utter vanity of everything human, of the certainty of the destruction of this world and of our everlasting condemnation if we were to die in the midst of our sins. In a word, I 'shunned not to declare to them all the counsel of God,' proclaiming death and destruction as it is in Adam, and life and salvation as it is in Jesus.

"On walking home after service, my wife almost wept for joy. Never in her life, she said, had she heard such a heart-searching sermon. But I was almost in a desponding mood, and quite ashamed of myself, 'for the people must have noticed my confusion', I said: 'and what a gossip it will be all over the place that the minister broke down in the middle of his sermon!' 'Surely,' I added, 'this was the worst sermon ever preached from a pulpit.'

"We had scarcely got home, however, when a lady desired to speak to me. The impression which her appearance made upon me was not very agreeable. She was gaudily dressed and carried a flourish of trinkets, lace and finery about her which created a most unfavorable impression.

"'Sir,' she said, while her lip quivered, 'could you permit me to speak to you in confidence?' 'Certainly, ma'am.'

"'I am a lost woman,' she said, while tears burst from her eyes; 'but you, sir, can perhaps tell me whether there is still salvation for me who have so long lived a careless life.'"

She then briefly told him her history. She had lived a gay, careless, pleasure-seeking life, without God in the world. That day she had gone to church, and his sermon had proved a two-edged sword to her soul, and now she entreated him to tell her of that Savior of whom he had spoken at the close of his sermon. He did so, and she received Christ by faith into her soul, and became a most consistent Christian.

In closing the account the minister says, "The Lord taught me this great lesson, which I hope I have not forgotten since—viz.: that oratory, rhetoric, etc., may be excellent things in a pulpit, but that without the eloquence of the Holy Spirit, which tells us of the love of him who died for our sins, they will never lead a lost sinner to the fold of the only Good Shepherd."

In the case of Stephen we see how a Christian can die. There was not only the absence of all fear, but the presence of great joy. The very worst that his enemies could do was to hasten him home. No shade of anger is on his brow, no feeling of revenge in his heart. On the contrary he loves them,

he longs for their salvation, and spends his last failing breath in prayer for them. Ah ! what an empty, vain thing is infidelity compared to such a religion as this. It can only fill the mind with dark negatives while the man lives, and curtain his death-bed round with guilty horrors and with dark despair.

"Deathless principle, arise !
Soar, thou native of the skies !
Pearl of price, by Jesus bought,
To his glorious likeness wrought,
Go, to shine before his throne—
Deck his mediatorial crown ;
Go, his triumphs to adorn—
Born for God, to God return.

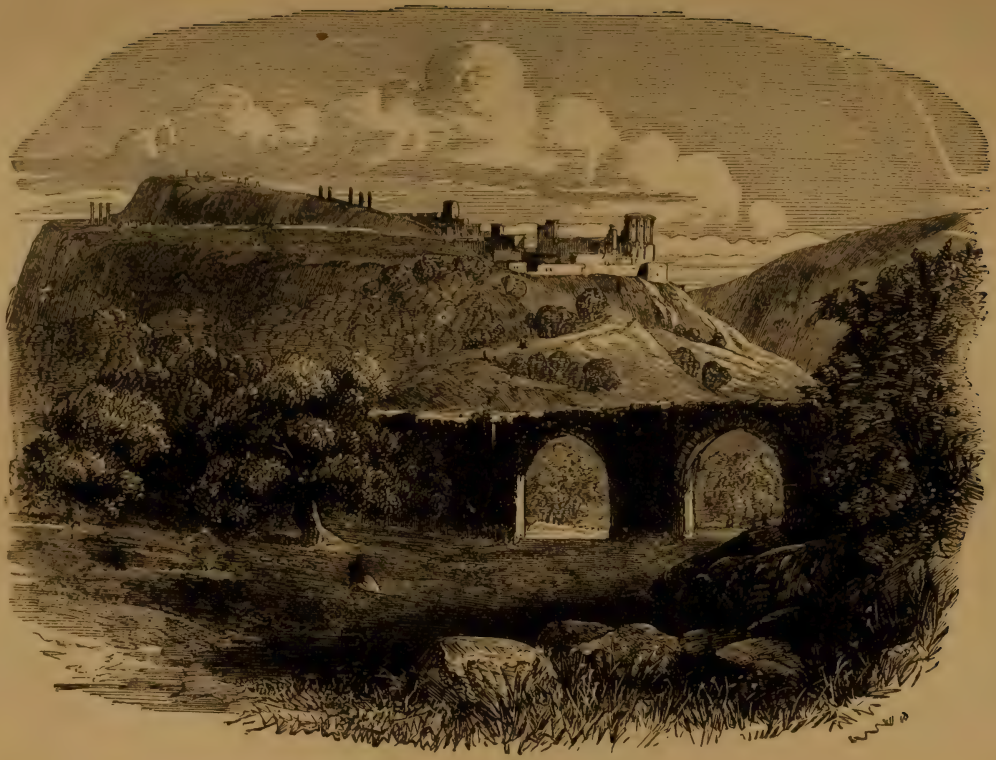
"Lo, he beckons from on high !
Fearless to his presence fly ;
Thine the merit of his blood,
Thine the righteousness of God ;
Angels, joyful to attend,
Hovering round thy pillow bend ;
Wait to catch the signal given,
And escort thee quick to heaven !"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### PETER, THE APOSTLE.

Peter, the apostle of our Lord Jesus, was a native of Galilee. To be an apostle was to occupy a very high and honorable position in the church of God, and one full of solemn responsibilities. Those who occupied this high and holy office were the heaven-appointed teachers and legislators in Christ's church. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that their word was law in the new kingdom of love. To rejcet their word was to reject the word of the Lord Jesus. To them was imparted the gift of working miracles, and of imparting supernatural powers to other members of the church. They were placed in a loftier position than the prophets of the old dispensation, inasfar as they had to be witnesses and representatives of a purely spiritual kingdom.

Peter was brought to Jesus in the first place by his brother Andrew. That brother and a companion of his, walking together, heard John the Baptist bear witness to the character of Jesus in the impressive words, "Behold the Lamb of God!" This so impressed the mind of Andrew that he hastened to communicate the good news to his brother Simon, and at once introduced him to the Lord. What a loving and brotherly act was this; and what a turning point in the life of Peter was this! The greatest act of kindness we can perform for our kindred, the best proof of love that we can give, is to seek the salvation of their souls. We may exert ourselves to bring them to occupy positions of worldly distinction and honor; to walk upon the eminences of life, the objects of the world's applause; but if we fail to bring them to Jesus, who alone can save their souls, what will it all avail? If parents only put forth one half the effort for their children's souls, that they do



SAMARIA AND MOUNT GERIZIM.

to be able to leave them an earthly inheritance, how numerous would be the conversion of souls among the young; and families would become nurseries for heaven.

Peter was a man of a naturally warm and ardent temperament. Everything that he did was apt to be done under strange impulses of feeling. He had an earnest impetuosity of character that made him frank and fearless in acting and speaking; but which often led him into unexpected difficulties. Of an affectionate heart, a hasty temper, a glowing imagination, he was deficient in that calmness of judgment that leads men to think and deliberate before they act. Such men are apt to call caution coldness, and anything short of a fiery enthusiam they are ready to denounce as indifference. In the deep earnestness of his warm heart he was ready to promise much and to undertake much in the service of those he loved; but there was a moral weakness in his character, a readiness to yield to present impulse, and to the influence of the company in which he happened to be, that made his promise unreliable. Not that he could ever be accused of insincerity, for his whole soul was in whatever he undertook; but he was apt to act under the power of his feelings, and unexpected events springing up would turn him in a new direction. Of course, I am only speaking of the traits of character that were natural to Peter; what grace made him and what he became under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, we shall see in the progress of this chapter.

When Peter was introduced to Jesus, as we might expect, he was received with great kindness. It was on that occasion that he gave him a new name, being about to take him into his service; a name expressive of great firmness. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone or rock." Hence the name Peter is given, which signifies the same as Cephas. On one occasion our Lord asked his disciples what the people thought of him; when Peter replied, giving the different opinions expressed. Then he was asked by our Lord, "Whom say ye that I am?" Promptly the answer came, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of

the living God." Matthew tells us that when Peter had made this noble confession, Jesus said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is evident from these words, that this confession was not a mere intellectual matter, but the avowal of a heart touched by the Holy Spirit. A bright ray of light from heaven had flashed upon his soul, and kindled up a flame of Divine love in his heart. We can imagine that we see his weather-beaten face kindle up with rapture as he uttered the words. From that moment he knew Jesus in his true character as the true Messiah, and could say, "To whom can we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

From the time this apostle entered our Lord's service, he manifested great zeal and activity; he was always prominent in speech and action; and yet we can see in the inspired history no evidence of that supremacy over the other apostles which has been claimed for him by the Romanists. Such superiority was never given him by our blessed Lord, was never claimed by himself, and was never recognized by his brethren. So that the arrogant claims of those who call themselves his successors, have no foundation in the Bible. Christ's church is not built upon any mere man, however holy and great he may be; but is built upon those sublime doctrines of Christ which Peter so boldly confessed under the influence of heavenly teaching. No doubt great and miraculous powers and gifts were given to this apostle, but they were given in common with his brethren of the apostolic office, and not to make him a lord over God's heritage.

Indeed, this kind of exalting one above another is utterly inconsistent with our Lord's aim in all his teaching, which was to produce humility of heart. "Learn of me, for I am lowly in spirit." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren." And the more of the spirit of Christ any one attains to the more humble he becomes. It

was when Job had a very near view of God, that he ceased to vindicate himself, and said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Perhaps there did not live a more holy man in his day than Isaiah, the evangelical prophet; and yet in God's sight he felt himself so vile that he cried out, "I am a man of unclean lips." Paul calls himself "the chief of sinners," and "the least of sinners;" while he was so near God that sometimes he seemed like one already in heaven. Yes, in Christ's Kingdom of love there is no exalting of one child of God above another, for through the precious blood of Jesus they are all heirs of God, all kings and priests unto God; and he who would be the greatest among them is to be the servant of all. The most humbled is to be the most exalted.

"The bird that soars on highest wing,
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest:
In lark and nightingale we see
What honor hath humility.

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In lowliest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down
The most when his soul ascends;
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footsteps of humility."

We come now to consider Peter in some of the phases of his spiritual life. And first, let us turn to the circumstance related in the fourteenth chapter of Matthew. It was the dark midnight hour on the Lake of Tiberias, and a fearful storm is raging. A ship is out in the tempest, and the furious winds and dashing waves threaten her with instant destruction. That little vessel contains a precious band of passengers; men who are to be an unspeakable blessing to the world. The chosen apostles of the Lord Jesus are there; but their Divine Master is not with them, and they are greatly alarmed for their safety. The Lord has been up on the mountains engaged in prayer. Behind the shelter of some old

gray rock, he has been pouring out his supplication; and oh, had we been there to listen, how formal would all our prayers have seemed compared with his! But he has not forgotten that ship struggling with the stormy elements. His watchful eye has been upon his loved disciples all the time, and at the right time he will appear for their deliverance.

Down he comes to the edge of the turbulent waters. He puts his foot upon a foam-crested wave, and from wave to wave walks as securely as upon dry land. Here we see the Divinity and humanity of our Lord acting in close contact. Up among those rocks on the mountain, we see his humanity, for it was as a man he prayed, often with strong cries and tears; but now that he walks upon the stormy water we see him as God. Seeing that majestic form approaching the ship, the disciples were afraid. But with gentle kindness he reassures them by the words, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Then Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." The Lord gave him the inviting word, and at once he goes forth to meet his Master. At first all goes well. His faith was strong, his eye was fixed upon Jesus, and he feared nothing. But, see! all at once his face shows fear, almost despair, and he begins to sink. What is the cause? Has any new danger arisen? We are told that "when he *saw* the wind boisterous, he was afraid." But it was so before he started. No change had taken place in Jesus, none in the storm, none in the ship, nor in his fellow-disciples; but the change was in himself. Instead of looking at his Lord, and thinking of his power and of his invitation, he began to think of his danger, at the greatness of the waves and the fierce power with which they were driven by the winds. Then his faith gave way and he began to sink. Still he has faith to believe that Jesus can save him, and cries, "Lord save; I perish!" A short, but very comprehensive prayer; and a successful one; for that hand which planted the stars in their places, lifts him up from impending ruin.

We see here a striking illustration of the blending of faith and unbelief, which is often seen in good people. If it be the

Lord, he seemed to say, I will fear nothing; the howling winds and the raging waves will not alarm, if I am only assured that blessed Master is here. But his Lord had before this told him that it was he himself that was walking on the water; and yet he says "Lord, if it be thou." Now, what right had he to put in that *if?* He had the Lord's own word for it, and that is the very highest evidence we can have. But, like many, he wanted something more. He wished some other token or sign to supplement the plain word of Him who cannot lie. God says to the sinner, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." But, instead of simply believing this, and at once being at peace, he looks for something more; some inward sign, some light from heaven, some sudden impression, almost like an audible voice, to tell him that his sins are forgiven him.

Our Lord condescended to give Peter the additional evidence he asked. He bids him come to him, and for a time his faith seems to be strong; but he had only gone a few steps when he began to sink. There was nothing to prevent his going on that might not have prevented his starting. True, the waves were tempestuous, but so they were before he left the boat. The same power that had enabled him to take two or three steps, could have enabled him to walk across the lake. But he turned his eyes from that power which sustained him, to his own weakness and his dangers. He became frightened at his former courage; began to doubt the propriety of his former faith; and he instantly began to sink like lead.

Often have we seen this same thing manifest itself in the spiritual history of the young convert. He has by faith received the Lord Jesus as his all and in all. Peace reigns in his heart; he rejoices in hope; and he goes on his way rejoicing. But after a little he begins to think of his sins, the evil that still lurks in his heart begins to show itself; his attention is taken from the fullness that is in Jesus to his own vileness, and then he begins to sink in a sea of troubles. Happy for him if he has still faith enough left to pray,—to cry, "Lord

save, or I perish." Then will the arm that is mighty to save lift him up and place his feet upon the unshaken rock of Divine promise. "If it be thou," will no longer be the cry of such a soul—that is the creed of unbelief; but it will rather say, "I know in whom I have believed."

This spirit of unbelief, if indulged, will grow upon the soul, till the man not only doubts about his own personal salvation, but almost about everything. We cannot conceive of anything more gloomy than a soul walking amid a perpetual doubt in regard to the most vital and important matters in the whole universe. Oh how chilling and miserable to live under the shadow of this tormenting *if*. If the Bible be true; if God really does take an interest in the affairs of human beings; if prayer is really ever heard or answered; if I am one of the elect; or, it may be, drifting down the dark stream of unbelief, till they come to the infidel's prayer, "Oh God, if there be a God!" Such is the state of many who have trifled with God's simple, plain testimony as given in his Holy Book; till they are given over to believe a lie. That is, they find it very easy to believe what is false, they have strong faith where error is concerned; but the moment that pure truth, fresh and glowing from heaven, is presented, they recoil back as from an enemy. They are like a person whose stomach has been ruined by intemperate living, till it constantly craves that which will only increase the evil, and repels, with loathing, that which would restore it to health and tone.

We see, then, that trusting in Christ the believer is very strong, but that away from him he is nothing but weakness. Paul had a high appreciation of Christ when he said, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me;" and he felt just as certain that without him he could do no good thing. The three Hebrews were able to walk through the furnace flames unhurt because the Son of God was with them. Fire or water, persecution or bodily affliction, the wrath of man or the blandishments of the world; all are powerless to harm when Jesus is with us. We can then say, "None of these things move me." When a hardened wretch put a pistol to

the heart of the devoted Fletcher, and threatened his life because of his faithfulness, he looked the ruffian calmly in his eye, and said, "Have I served the Lord these thirty years, now to be afraid of death?" Faith fears nothing. Its language is not "Lord, if it be thou," but rather, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in his sight." Our religion, if real, will begin and end in distrust of ourselves and in trust in Jesus. A noble Christian sailor, when asked how he could remain so calm during a fearful storm, replied, "Though I sink, I shall but drop into my Father's hands, for he holds all these waters there."

But we must hasten on to notice other events in the life of Peter.

From the naturally impulsive and forward character of Peter he comes before us more frequently than any of the other of the apostles in the New Testament narratives. On one occasion many of our Lord's disciples were forsaking him. The holy, heart-searching truths which he preached; the sacrifices and self-denial which a profession of his name demanded; the persecution and contempt to which his followers were constantly exposed; all acted as a sifting wind to separate the chaff from the wheat—the mere professor from the possessor of his love. Even the apostles seemed shaken, and were ready to depart, for Jesus said to them, "Will ye also go away?" Peter's noble reply was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." This was very fine, and makes our hearts warm toward the servant of the Lord; but only a short time after this he gave utterance to words which called forth a most emphatic rebuke from the Savior.

The circumstances were these: the Lord was preparing the minds of the apostles for the tragic events that were to take place at Jerusalem, when he must die, the just for the unjust. Peter, acting, as usual, under the power of his feelings, revolted at the thought of his loved Master being put to death, and at once said, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." This was a manifestation of great presumption, and called out one of the most severe rebukes our Savior ever

uttered. "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorist not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter had at this time a very imperfect conception of the nature of the work which our Lord came to do. He wanted to leave the Cross out of that work, and that would have been to cut off the hope of the world—the only refuge of guilty men. Alas! how many there are still, who are willing to blot out the Cross, to speak much of Christ's beautiful life, and nothing at all about his vicarious death. The Cross is still an offence to such; to those that perish it is foolishness.

This apostle was greatly honored by his Divine Master by being permitted to be with him on special occasions of great interest. He was one of the favored three that saw the transfiguration on the holy mount. Seeing our Lord's divinity bursting through the body he had taken, so that his face shone like the sun in its brightness, he was filled with rapture, and exclaimed, "Lord, it is good for us to be here;" and even proposed that a permanent abode should be made there. This scene made an impression upon him which he never forgot. He refers to it in his second epistle in most impressive terms. Peter was also one of those who were permitted to be with our Lord on the occasion of his deep agony in the garden, when over and over again he uttered the prayer that the cup of suffering might pass. The apostle and his associates were overpowered by sleep and received the mild rebuke, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" accompanied with a loving apology for their weakness. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

But as the time drew near for our adorable Redeemer to take his departure from earth, events occurred that bring Peter prominently before us, and that powerfully rebuke that self-confidence which is so strong an element in our fallen nature. Jesus had sought to prepare the minds of his disciples for the storm which was soon to burst upon them, and had warned them of the feelings with which they would be tempted to regard him when he became the object of popular

hate. "All ye shall be offended because of me." Here Peter spoke out with great boldness, and no doubt with perfect sincerity, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet shall I never be offended." Our Lord, to warn him not to be so self-confident, told him that he would deny him three times that very night. The first trial to which he was put, he seemed to have a great deal of courage of a certain kind. When they came out to arrest his Lord he showed no signs of fear; but drawing his sword, he displayed all the fiery ardor of the soldier who is ready to lay down his life for the cause he loves. There is no doubt that had Christ's kingdom been of this world, and had he required his apostles to lead forth an army to fight for him, Peter would have been distinguished as a military leader. He was not wanting in mere physical courage, but in that higher and nobler endowment which we call moral courage, we will see that he afterwards failed. There are many who could rush up to the cannon's mouth, or storm the deadly breach, or lead on the desperate and almost hopeless charge, without shrinking; who have not the courage to kneel down and pray before a wicked companion, or stand up for Jesus in the camp. Mere physical courage the inferior animals possess, but to stand up for the right, if the whole world were opposing us and pointing at us the finger of scorn, has something God-like about it.

Jesus is taken by an armed band and is hurried off to the house of Caiaphas the high priest. The other disciples have fled, but where is Peter? We look to find him by his Lord's side, but he is not there. Looking away behind, you see him following *afar off;* and we are not told that he seemed in a great hurry to catch up. But when at last the place is reached we surely expect to find him side by side with his Lord; but no such sight gladdens our eyes. He enters the palace, but it is only to mingle with the servants. He does not mean to deny Christ; he takes a deep interest in the result of the trial, and he wished to be near Jesus without being at all exposed to the mockery and scorn that a full knowledge of who he was would involve. Ah! he is not the only one who has tried to

find a middle place between Christ and the world; but it has always proved a failure. Not to be for the Lord fully is to be against him; and the man who does not stand on his side, patiently and even joyfully taking all the scorn and blows that belong to the position, is counted with his enemies.

How astonished must Peter have felt when a damsel turned to him and said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." We can almost see his face flush and hear the throbbing of his heart as he replies, "I know not what thou sayest." He thinks it best to change his position, however, and he went out into the porch, where another met him and said, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth." He seems now to have felt a good deal of irritation, for with an oath he said, "I do not know the man." Then returning into the hall he stood by the fire to warm himself, when some persons standing by said to him, "Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee." Here was a proof brought home to him that he could not deny, and, filled with turbulent passion, his guilty soul rushes into greater guilt by adding cursing and swearing to this his third denial of his Lord.

Alas! how weak is man, if left to his own strength, in the conflict with temptation. Can this be the same man who made such a noble confession of Christ, who boasted that though all the world should deny him he would stand faithful, who so lately was ready to fight for him, and had taken the emblematic bread out of his hand? Yes, this is the same man. He had been warned of the temptation that was coming upon him, but did not seem to heed it. He was confident in his own power of resisting evil, and, stepping out of the path of duty to mingle with the Lord's enemies, he fell. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

But Peter's fall, though very great, was not of long continuance. That very night he is seen coming back to his God a weeping penitent. The crowing of the cock, to which our Lord referred when he warned him of his danger, together with a glance of peculiar expressiveness from those eyes that had so often looked lovingly upon him, were the means that

led to his repentance. It is supposed that our Lord was standing at the upper end of the hall, and that at the fit moment he turned and gave the guilty man that look which he will never forget through all eternity. All his sinfulness, with its peculiar aggravations, was made to flash upon his mind. His vain boasts, his Lord's predictions, his oaths and curses, the unutterable vileness and meanness of his conduct; all lit up his soul with the gleams of a sudden conviction, as we have seen the mighty ruins of some once noble building lit up by the midnight lightning. Rushing from the palace he went out into the gloom of night, and wept bitterly. Ah! now he begins to come to right views of himself. Memory is taking him over the past, and all his sins are made to stand before him like accusing spirits of vengeance. He has no excuse to make for them. They are his own—the only thing that he can call his own; and nothing but bitterness of spirit does the sight of them produce.

We read no more of this apostle till he comes before us on the glorious morning of the Lord's resurrection. No doubt the interval had been a time of great anguish of soul to him, of strong cries and tears before God. The tidings had reached his ears that the Redeemer had arisen from the dead, and we see him, in company with John, running in eager haste to reach the place where he might judge for himself. There was one thing which must have been very comforting to his sad and burdened heart. A heavenly messenger appeared to the women at the sepulcher, and, after announcing that the Lord had risen, told them to go and tell his disciples, but mentioning the name of Peter in particular. This let him know that the Lord still thought of him, still loved him, and wanted to comfort him with a message of good news. It was as if he had said, "Go tell my brethren, but that poor backslider and wanderer, Peter, in particular, that I am still alive. I know how sorrowful is his heart, how true his repentance, and I have died for his sins, and have risen again for his justification." This token of love, and of deep personal interest, coming from the Master he loved but had so fearfully

sinned against, must have been unspeakably dear to his heart.

The next we hear of Peter is in that remarkable interview with Jesus, at the sea of Tiberias. Several of the apostles were engaged in fishing, but had not succeeded in catching anything after a night of hard toil. Early in the morning a stranger appeared on the shore who encouraged them to make another trial with their nets. This they did, and they could not drag up the abundance of fishes which they contained. This seems to have led John to think of who the stranger was, for he exclaimed, "It is the Lord." No sooner had Peter heard this, than, with all his characteristic impetuosity, he plunged into the sea and soon stood, dripping with the briny waters, before Jesus. This was the first time he had seen his Lord since that awful night when he denied him, and since he gave him that look that melted his heart. Jesus breaks the silence by the pointed question, "Lovest thou me?" Three times this question was repeated, at which he felt grieved; though as he had thrice denied his Master he had no right to complain. We notice, also, that in speaking to him the Lord withholds his name of honor, and addresses him by his old worldly name, "Simon, son of Jonas." Yet, when he answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee;" our blessed Savior took him back into his service and appointed him his work, saying, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs." Here we see the real test of Christian character, which is, love to Christ. It is not mere opinions, nor professions, nor resolutions that are wanted, but pure heart love to the Savior. As John Newton says, "Jesus did not ask Peter what he thought about the five points of theology so long in dispute among controversialists." Neither did he ask him how his fear and terrors of coming wrath. To believe with the whole heart that Jesus died for us produces love to him; and love to him produces obedience to his holy will; and this is true religion.

In all his after life Peter showed the transforming power of

the love to Christ that had taken possession of his heart. There is no more wavering, no more fear of consequences if he follows the Lord fully. He stands up for the Lord firm as a rock. The next we see of him is at the great outpouring of the spirit on the day of Pentecost. The city is in an uproar. A wild, turbulent mob fills the street, agitated by conflicting passions. Up stands Peter, the sturdy fisherman, and begins to speak with melting power. Judging from its effects, he delivers the greatest sermon ever uttered by human lips. His words of fire go from heart to heart. Sobs and cries and prayers are heard all over the crowd, till at last the preacher's voice is lost in a general cry to God for mercy; and also an earnest cry for spiritual direction, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The result was, that three thousand were added to the church.

Henceforth Peter seems an entirely different man. He comes before us often in the first part of the Acts of the Apostles, and always in a manner to show us the wonderful power and grace of God in him. In healing the sick; in preaching Jesus in all kinds of places and under the most deadly persecutions; in telling the authorities that he must obey God rather than man; in his calm trust in God when in prison, and expecting to be led out to execution; in short, in his whole deportment he shows the mighty power of Christ's love when it takes possession of the human heart.

Peter was honored to be the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He was also honored to be one of the inspired writers in the Holy Book; and his two precious epistles have edified millions of God's children, and will continue to do so to the end of time. Being dead he yet speaketh. And he was honored to die as a martyr for Jesus. It is generally held that he died when about seventy-five years of age, under the persecutions of the bloody Nero. As to the manner of his death there is an old tradition that he was crucified, but, at his own request, with his head downwards, he deeming himself unworthy to die as his Lord died. And now he walks in white with that gracious Savior that treated him so tenderly, and that he loved so dearly.

"Come, wandering sheep, O come!
I'll bind thee to My breast,
I'll bear thee to thy home,
And lay thee down to rest.
O come then to My breast,
This is a blessed home,
Come, wandering sheep, O come!

"I saw thee stray forlorn,
And heard thee faintly cry,
And on the tree of scorn
For thee I deigned to die,
What greater gift could I
Give than to seek the tomb?
Come, wandering sheep, O come!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### JOHN, THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

John comes before us with this preëminence attached to him above all the apostles, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." In a high and general sense he loved them all; but John, the youngest of them all, and possessed of a sweet, amiable disposition, and a wealth of loving affection, seems to have had the special friendship of our adorable Lord. Many proofs of Christ's loving regard and confidence are given in the life of this apostle. He was not only one of the three permitted to witness his glory on the mount and his agony in the garden, but to him was first committed the secret of who should betray him, and into his care our Lord gave his mother in the last hour of his dying anguish. He not only loved John with the higher love of a Savior, but with the warm love of a human friend. As a man he had, no doubt, his own particular attachments, as we see often illustrated in the history of his life.

John and his brother James were called into our Lord's service at the same time. When called to the apostleship they were called Boanerges, meaning sons of thunder. In John's life there is not much of exciting interest to record. The events of stirring importance which we find in the lives of Peter and Paul are, to a great extent, wanting in his. He was of a loving, gentle, mild and meditative character; one who would be more at home in the study and the closet, than struggling and contending for the truth in the rough scenes of the world.

There are none of the apostles about whom tradition has been so busy in preserving anecdotes as John. Eusebius relates the following beautiful story: When on a visit to a city near Ephesus, he commended to the care of the pastor of the church a young man of fine personal appearance and of good

mind, as one suited to the work of the ministry. The pastor neglected his duty, and after a while the young man became idle in his habits and went from bad to worse, till he was prevailed upon to join a band of robbers, such as then had their strongholds in the vicinity of Greek cities. He even became their captain, and was eminent in crime. After a long time John visited the place again and enquired for the young man. "He is dead," said the pastor, "dead to God." After hearing the particulars, and solemnly rebuking the pastor, he mounted a horse, rode into the country, and was taken prisoner. He did not attempt to flee, but said, "For this purpose I am come; conduct me to your captain." When he entered the presence of the armed bandit, the guilty man knew him and tried to flee from him. "Why dost thou fly, my son," he said, "from thy father—thy defenceless, aged father? Fear not; thou still hast hope of life, I will pray to Christ for thee, I will give my life for thine. Believe that Christ hath sent me."

The man was quite subdued, cast himself into the arms of the apostle, prayed with many tears for pardon, and was restored to the fellowship of the church.

There is also a traditional story of John being carried into the church at Ephesus in his old age, and of his stretching out his trembling hands, while he said, several times over, "Little children, love one another."

There are many proofs that John was not only loved of Jesus, but that he returned the love with the warmest fervor. "We love him because he first loved us." His standing near to the cross when the other disciples had forsaken the Master, his tender care of the bereaved mother, the early visit to the sepulcher, out-running even the impetuous Peter, all tell how much he loved his Divine Lord. It was more than a love of mere human friendship, it was the love of a soul that felt itself saved by precious blood shed on the cross. He felt that he owed his all for time and eternity to that Savior, and therefore esteemed it his very highest honor to work and to suffer in his service. This is vital and essential to the spiritual life of all; there can be no true religion without it.

This love which the apostle had for Jesus led to love for the members of the church. His religion was of a highly practical character, and he reasoned that love to the Great Father would produce love to his children. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Here is a statement that commends itself to our judgments and our consciences. "If a man says, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" He scathingly rebukes that class of people whose love and liberality is all in an empty profession. "Whoso hath this world's good, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." With him Christian love was not merely something for poets to sing of, or for orators to declaim about, but the very life and spring of all spiritual action.

John's natural character has been, I think, to some extent mistaken. Some speak as if this love to which we have referred was natural to him, the result of disposition rather than of grace. Modern painters have represented him with a soft and languid expression upon his countenance, and of a weak and feminine appearance. Stanley, in his "Apostolic Age," says of him, "It is not as John the beloved disciple, but as John the Son of Thunder; not as the apostle who leaned on his Master's breast at supper, but as the apostle who called down fire from heaven, who claimed with his brother the highest places in the kingdom of heaven, and who forbade the man to cast out devils, that he was known to the readers of the first three gospels." We see what he afterwards became under the power of Christ's love, and of the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. All that depth and warmth of love was not the cause of our Lord loving him, but the effect of his doing so.

The loving presence of Jesus transformed him into his own image, so that his revengeful and ambitious temper is seen no more. Like Him he loved, he was meek and lowly of heart. This will be the result of communion with Jesus always. It changes the whole man, and takes possession of his entire na-

ture. Where lusts, evil tempters, irritable and revengeful passions, and dark, sullen thoughts held sway, Christ's love takes the control and makes him a new creature. It is a bad sign of us if our religion does not make us better in all the relations of life, so that all our friends will not only know that we have been with Jesus, but know also that we have been made Christ-like by the contact. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

We will now call the readers attention to some events in the life of this apostle that will illustrate the remarks we have made above.

On a certain occasion John and some other of the disciples saw a man casting out devils in the name of Christ, and he at once forbade him to do so, because he did not belong to their company. This was such a narrow and bigoted view of our Lord's design in coming to earth that he rebuked it in the most pointed manner. "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us, is for us." This rebukes that spirit which looks upon the efforts of other denominations with suspicion because they differ, in some respects, from us. It condemns those who look with a cold eye, and utter doubtful words about revivals that are not conducted by their own church. Such persons, instead of rejoicing that souls are saved, are ready to first call your attention to some extravagance in conducting the meetings, or some mere incidental blemish, such as belongs to nearly all human efforts. Let us try to cultivate the noble liberality of soul that marked Paul when he rejoiced that the gospel was preached, even when a spirit of opposition and envy was prominent in those who proclaimed it.

Let me now call attention to another error into which John fell. When Jesus was journeying to Jerusalem a village of Samaritans refused to entertain him, no doubt on account of their hatred of the Jewish people; John regarded this as an insult to his Master and became very indignant and wished fire from heaven to be sent upon the offenders. This was zeal without knowledge, and showed a spirit the very reverse of the gospel of love. Our Lord's reply conveyed not only a

sharp rebuke, but also a noble sentiment which should fill the world with joy. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He told them that they knew not what manner of spirit they had when under the profession of love for him, they sought to rush unprepared souls into eternity. How true it is, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." O that we had always the loving and forgiving spirit of Jesus! That spirit which led him to pray for his enemies, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a lovely and perfect model we have in Jesus!

No doubt the fiery displeasure of the apostle on this occasion arose, in part, from his strong prejudice against the Samaritans, whom he had been taught to despise from his youth. He had often heard the Scribes and the Pharises heap insults upon the head of his Lord, and yet had not wished them to be consumed by the lightnings of heaven. Hence we should avoid the indulgence of prejudice against our fellowmen. It will mislead us in all our thoughts of them, bias our modes of reasoning about them, and stamp with its own dark impress all the conclusions at which we arrive about them.

We now call the reader's attention to an event in John's history, which shows the imperfect knowledge which, at that time, he had of Christ's kingdom. When our Lord was on his last journey to Jerusalem, and had foretold his death on the cross, John and his brother presented by their mother a petition requesting that they might be exalted to the highest positions in the kingdom of heaven. They had worldly notions of the Savior establishing a temporal kingdom on earth, and selfishly wanted to secure for themselves the best places. The mild reply was, "Ye know not what ye ask." Alas! how often is this the case with us all. We ask things in our ignorance, which, if God were to give us, would prove our ruin. How much of what is called praying breath is spent in vain, because we ask amiss. Surely there is great need of the prayer, "Lord, teach us how to pray."

Jesus asked them, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" That is, can ye take part in those most appalling troubles that lie right before me, and like surging billows are soon to come down upon me? To this question they gave an affirmative reply: "We are able." Our Lord acknowledged that they might be made partakers of his sufferings, which was afterwards the case; but that an exalted place in glory could only be given to those for whom it was prepared, that is, a holy people. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Its lofty seats are not the gifts of partial friendship, but are given to those who through the blood of Jesus, have attained the greatest likeness to Him.

There is one event in the life of John that greatly endears him to every Christian heart. When the blessed Savior was on the cross, in the midst of his sufferings, there stood the noble apostle to the very last. And his courage and his constancy did not go without their reward. Looking upon him from the cross, his dying Master gave him a proof of his great regard and confidence, by committing to his care his mother. He took her to his own house, and from that hour treated her with all filial tenderness and love. The love of Jesus which he saw so fully displayed on the bloody tree, and in the whole of the Redeemer's wonderful life, transformed his whole nature into love. Henceforth he lived not to himself, nor sought his own glory, but the glory of God, and the good of mankind became the supreme desire of his soul.

And it is faith in Christ's love alone that can change any human heart. None are born holy, none love God and the souls of men naturally. There are differences of natural disposition among the human family, but so far as real holiness of heart is concerned, they have all alike departed from God, and can only be brought back by the blood of Jesus. This was seen lately in a Tract Society meeting, in London. A man who had been a notorious sinner, rose up and said:

"These fists, my friends, struck the devil's blows; these feet trod the devil's steps; this body was the devil's home;

this soul, the devil's victim; but one day a tract of the Religious Tract Society was put into my hands, and Jesus Christ was too strong for the prize fighter that stands before you. My soul was in such a state that I groaned and wept; I could not eat or sleep. On Lord's day morning I heard Mr. Spurgeon preach; and as he lifted up Jesus as the refuge for the sinner's soul, I said to myself, 'That is what I want; He is a refuge for my soul;' and then and there my soul got liberty.

"Now," added he, "these hands work for Jesus, these feet walk with Jesus, this body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, this soul is the purchase of his blood. Men, which of you will keep back from Jesus to-night, when he has saved the prize-fighter before you?"

Peter's question of mere curiosity, in regard to Jesus' future, got this reply: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This gave rise to a report that John was not to die; and although he refuted the notion in the gospel that he wrote, yet even in the days of Augustine there were some who thought him still alive. He was, perhaps, the only one of the apostles who did not die a martyr's death, and that, not because he was less faithful than others, but because God had other work for him to do, down to his old age. He had the true martyr spirit, and would have died a thousand deaths rather than deny his Lord.

After the Lord's ascension, John comes out more prominent as a zealous worker for the truth. In common with the others he enjoyed the great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He and Peter are spoken of as frequent companions in works of faith and in labors of love. When going up to the temple to worship, they cured the lame man in the name of Jesus. They were together preaching when they were arrested and cast into prison. They were together before the council when they refused to promise to preach no more, but boldly said they must obey God rather than man. They also went down from Jerusalem together to comfort and confirm the young converts in Samaria. There they imparted many spiritual gifts to the people of God, and preached the

gospel with great power in the region around. These two men, so unlike in their natural disposition, were great helps to each other; and like Luther and Melancthon amid the struggles of the Reformation, they accomplished that together which, separated, neither could have done so well.

It would seem that John made his chief residence at Jerusalem. Paul speaks of him in his epistle to the Galatians, as a main pillar in the church there. But after some time he removed to Ephesus, and from thence he took long journeys in Asia, to publish the good news of Jesus.

We are told that during the great persecution raised by the Roman emperor Domitian, John was sent to Rome, where he was condemned to die by being cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which the Lord brought him forth unhurt. Whether this tradition be true or not, we know that man is immortal till his Lord's time has come to call him, and that this apostle was preserved to a good old age, in spite of all his enemies.

John's gospel was published after all the others, and brings out many things that had been omitted by them. He gives the Divinity of the Lord Jesus a very prominent place in all his writings, and joyfully bears his testimony to not only beholding his glory, but to also receiving of his fullness. He sees in his Lord two things that specially fill his soul with delight, that is, LIGHT and LOVE. Light to illuminate the whole mind, light to walk by in this dark world, light to work by in the Master's service; and love to fill the heart, to give the true motive-power to every duty, and to draw us in our heart-longings to that world where all is love.

This holy apostle lived to see the gospel that he loved extend through the greater part of the then known world. But he lived also to see some deadly errors creep into the church. None of these distressed him more than that which denied the divinity of Jesus. He opposed it with great firmness and earnestness. "This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." We have much reason to bless God for his

writings, which have been for the defence of truth, and for the comfort and edification of God's people in every age, since his day. There is great sweetness of expression, joined to great sublimity of thought, in all that we have from his pen.

Although John's epistles breathe a sweet spirit of love, yet when he comes to speak of error he comes out as a true son of thunder. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." And he goes on to tell them not to receive such into their houses, nor bid them God speed. In this age of sham liberality this would no doubt be called bigotry; but love to the souls of men is quite consistent with undying hatred to soul-destroying errors. There is a latitudinarianism that sneers at everything in the form of zeal or doctrine. But this finds no sanction in the book of God. Paul said that if any man preached any other gospel he was to be considered accursed.

At length the hand of persecution fell heavily upon the apostle. He is banished to the island of Patmos, condemned, as he tells us, "For the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." It was while there that that wonderful and sublime book of the Revelations was written by him. In the midst of his solitude, on one particular Lord's day, his soul was greatly refreshed and comforted. Under the sweet influence of the Spirit, his prison became like a paradise to him. Suddenly a voice addressed him in tones distinct and clear; and turning round he saw, to his unspeakable joy, his blessed Lord standing before him. There is He on whose bosom he leaned so lovingly, with whom he walked and talked amid the scenes of Judea, and whose sufferings on the cross he had witnessed; but how changed is his appearance!

Then he was the man of sorrows, in the midst of his humiliation; now he is glorified. He appeared to John clothed in a garment of light and glory, and girt about with a golden girdle. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet like brass when it burns and gleams in a furnace, and the majestic tones of his voice were like the sound of many waters. His countenance shone like the sun in its noon day glory; in his hand

were seven stars, signifying the ministers of the churches; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, no doubt emblematic of the power of his word. At this sight John fell down like one dead, but Jesus laid his hand upon his head saying, "Fear not; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore."

He was then commanded to write in a book the things that would be revealed to him. The counsels of the Lord in regard to future ages, and the wonderful designs of Providence in the future, were all made known to him in visions hard to be understood. The glories of the heavenly home were made known to him, in views thrilling and delightful. He was permitted to look upon the throne of God, and to hear the lofty swell of the song of praise from angels and saints. He gives us such a view of God, and of the future glorious home of the believer as excite our love and joy. This poor world seems but a dark passage-way through which we are passing to our Father's home, and we long to get out into the light of an eternal day; the society of heaven seems more attractive as we gaze upon their employments, and we long to join the blessed company that move around the eternal throne.

John was privileged with bright views of heaven when on earth, but how much clearer and brighter does he now behold eternal things. Compared with what he now knows, he was formerly seeing dimly through a glass. Let us seek to get ready for that state by being washed in the blood of Jesus, by having the seal of God on our foreheads, and by such a training of love in communion with Jesus here, that it will be easy for us to join in the song of heaven: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

John found in his solitude that his Lord had not forgotten him, nor the churches from which his bodily presence was now removed. More than half a century had gone past since he ascended on high, and he shows that his love to the church is still the same. It is true, that during that time he had appeared

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to the dying Stephen, and the persecuting Saul; but now he breaks again the silence of eternity to deliver his last message to the churches, and to complete the canon of Scripture.

This renowned Isle of Patmos where the apostle was so long confined, is often visited by modern travelers. They describe it as rugged, desolate and barren, and in every way unattractive. To this gloomy abode Roman officers conducted the beloved disciple, and left him alone with God and a good conscience, the best of company in trouble. There is a rocky mountain which rises up from the sea, and about half way up is found a natural grotto formed in the rocks. Tradition says that into this John often retired for prayer and meditation, and that this was the place where he saw the Lord Jesus on that memorable Lord's day of which he speaks.

We can imagine that we see this venerable old man, then about ninety years of age, walking around his rocky prison. His countenance beams with love, and as he looks over the past, as old men delight to do, he has the most delightful memories to recall. Unlike the great Emperor of the French when confined to his isle of the sea, he has not to look back upon bloody battle-fields, and desolate homes, and blazing cities with long trains of widows and orphans, made such by his mad ambition. There are few things in history more sad than that great general in his last moments, muttering out his commands to his armies, and in imagination fighting over his bloody conflicts when he was in the grasp of the great conqueror death. John had very different scenes to look back upon.

With what happy emotions would he look back upon the time when the God-man came up to him and said, "Follow me." And with what delight he would call up the many discourses he had heard from the lips of Jesus, and the many mighty miracles he had seen wrought by his hands. That sight on the Mount of Transfiguration; the institution of the supper when he leaned upon the bosom of the Lord; the awful night in Gethsemane, with its prayers and sweat of blood; and the cross with the Divine sufferer upon it, the darkness, the earthquake, the cry, "It is finished;" all would he fondly dwell upon in his solitary

hours. He would recall the joy he felt when the good news broke upon his ears, "The Lord is risen," and his early run to the sepulcher; the happy meeting when Jesus unexpectedly appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you;" and that wonderful walk up the slopes of Olivet, when he breathed upon them his parting blessing and was received up into glory.

Nor could he cease to think of subsequent thrilling scenes, such as the mighty out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the death of Stephen, the martyrdom of his own dear brother James, the awful destruction of Jerusalem, and many pleasant remembrances of the holy lives and the triumphant deaths of his fellow apostles, all of whom had entered upon their eternal rest. Standing upon that barren rock, he could take a long look over the past and a joyful look into the future, and say, in his own inspired words, "Behold, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

This was the real heaven for which John longed, likeness to Christ. His loftiest conception of happiness was to be *with* Jesus and *like* him at the same time. It is a glorious thing to be a son of God, but to be such a son as Christ had proved himself to be—one who never disobeyed, who regarded it as his meat and drink to do his Father's will, and who pleased the Father in all things perfectly—this is what is implied in our being like him. Yes, likeness to him has been the strongest wish, the most ardent hope of pious souls in all ages. For this their prayers have ascended to heaven by night and by day; and when at last they shall be able to utter sinless songs and adore God with a sinless heart, who can tell their unspeakable blessedness! With sinless souls, intellects strengthened and exalted, and tongues flowing out in an eloquence of song and praise, O what a rapturous eternity is before God's people!

In closing this chapter let us observe, that we have the same reasons for loving Jesus that John had. For us the same precious blood was shed, the same agonizing sufferings endured; for us he intercedes in heaven, and he sends the Holy Spirit

to make intercession within us on earth. For us he has prepared the same home in heaven, and his Providences taking the same tender care of us in our journey on earth. John said, "We love him because he first loved us." That is the gospel in a small compass—in a nutshell, as it were. It is one of those strong, pithy sentences with which his writings abound, and which as Dr. McAll said, contain the very *core* of the gospel. Faith fixes its eye upon his love as manifested to us, and as it gazes, the heart begins to burn, till it cries, "O, the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of the love of Christ it passeth knowledge!"

"Without, within, is light, is light,
Around, above, is love, is love;
We enter, to go out no more,
We raise the song unsung before,
We doff the sackcloth that we wore;
For all is joy above.

"Ascend, Beloved, to the life;
Our days of death are o'er;
Mortality has done its worst,
The fetters of the tomb are burst,
The last has now become the first,
For ever, evermore.

"Ascend, Beloved, to the feast;
Make haste, thy day is come;
Thrice blest are they the Lamb doth call
To share the heavenly festival,
In the new Salem's palace-hall,
Our everlasting home!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES.

We are now to consider the Christian character and career of one of the greatest of men. His original name was Saul, and he was born in the city of Tarsus, in Cilicia, which lies on the bank of Cydnus. It was a special favor conferred upon the natives of that city, that they had the freedom and privileges of Roman citizens. His parents were Jews, and it was his boast that he could trace his descent from Abraham, and that all the necessary ritual observances had been attended to in his youth. His own words concerning this are, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews."

We can conceive of the deep interest with which he would listen to his mother as she told him the wonderful story of God's dealings with her people, and sang to him some of the sweet songs of David. He was taught the trade of a tent-maker, as it was customary with the Jews to give their children the knowledge of some trade, even when in opulent circumstances; so that whatever might happen in after life, they might be able to support themselves. It is much to be regretted that this custom is not universal. That Saul's parents were in easy circumstances, we infer from the fact that they gave him a learned education and sent him to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel, the great doctor of the age in which he lived.

The first notice we have of Saul in the sacred history, is on the occasion of the martyrdom of Stephen. He was consenting to that vile murder, and took charge of the clothing of those who stoned to death that good man. But it is of the nature of sin that its votaries go from bad to worse, and this young man was no exception. He became furious and savage as a wild beast in his opposition to Christians. He made

havoc of the church, dragging men and women to prison and to death, as his daily employment. We are told that he "breathed out threatenings and slaughters," as if his very life breath was vengeance and blood. He tells us himself that he was "exceeding mad" against Christ's followers, and not content with a local bloodshed, he even pursued them to strange cities. He got a commission to go to Damascus on this bloody errand, with a number of assistants, and entered upon it with all that relentless determination and fiery zeal which were a part of his nature.

We see that wicked, cruel band on the way to that distant city. Fresh from scenes of carnage and blood, and flushed with the power that has been put into their hands by their superior, they rush on like blood-hounds that have got upon the right scent. The leader, though young in years, is old in the business of persecution; and in this journey he hopes to gratify his vindictive ambition, and acquire fresh laurels as an enemy of Jesus of Nazareth. His strong and active mind is engaged in planning his mode of proceeding. He will hunt the Christians out of every retreat; he will give them no quarter; he will listen to no appeal for mercy; and will not be satisfied till the last follower of Jesus has perished from the earth. With knit brow and flashing eye he presses his way forward, till at last the domes of the city break upon his view.

But what means this! His horse recoils and the young leader falls to the earth. The whole company are thrown into confusion. They are brave and are accustomed to fight with dauntless courage; but this is a case in which swords and bravery are of no use. A light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, has blazed around them; and a voice of thrilling power addresses the leader, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" His followers hear the voice, but do not see the majestic form that appears to him, and kindly reasons with him. What a change has taken place in a few moments! His plans of vengeance are all given up, his bigotry and prejudice against Christians, his hatred to the name of Jesus, all have disappeared; the hands that grasped the sword of

persecution are now lifted to heaven in supplication; and he who was to have proudly entered yonder city as a conqueror, is led into it blind and helpless.

When Saul, from his prostrated position on the earth, asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" and got back the answer, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," he must have been cut to the heart with deepest contrition. That all this time when he thought that he was doing God's service, he was persecuting the only Savior of the world, and that he was now speaking to him so tenderly when he might have crushed him with the thunderbolts of his power, must have filled him with self-abhorrence. Every blow that he had given the cause of truth was now rebounding upon his own heart. From a lethargy long and death-like, his conscience has sprung up into self-accusing energy; and all that he was so proud of before he is now heartily ashamed of. An entire revolution takes place in his soul. He becomes a new creature in Christ. What he called right before he now hates as a vile wrong. What he before called truth he now sees to be damnable error. He now prays for the first time, though he had been *saying* prayers all his life. The lion has become a lamb, the vulture a dove; it is the Lord's doings and wondrous in our eyes. This was a brand plucked out of the burning, and should teach us never to despair of any sinner, however far he may have gone in sin. God can snatch the prey from the mighty, and make one who seemed helplessly toppling on the brink of hell the mightiest instrument of good to souls that God ever honored.

At this time Paul's soul passed through a deep law work, such as he afterwards describes in his writings. He had been a proud Pharisee before, thinking that he had kept the law of God perfectly, because he had not committed outwardly the acts of sin which it condemns. Now he felt that the law reached to the feelings and emotions of his corrupt heart, and that he had, in that view of the matter, been breaking this holy law every moment of his God-dishonoring life. Thus he tells us that when the commandment came to him in this sense, sin revived and he died. His whole life was now seen to be sin,

and all his former proud hopes of his own goodness died within him. All dependence on himself for salvation failed; he saw himself the chief of sinners; and he was glad to go to Jesus, all lost and guilty as he was, for pardon and righteousness.

It must have been a hard struggle to give up all his own fancied goodness, and to be saved alone by grace. It is always so with these haughty Pharisees. The thief on the cross, and persons of that stamp, who know they have no goodness of their own to depend upon, will come to Jesus at once; while those who have lived a moral life, will keep looking to their good deeds, and balancing their good works against their bad ones, rejecting Christ, and alternating between hope and fear, for months and even years.

A gentleman tells us of a conversation which he had with an old lady, on her death-bed, which throws light on this subject. She acknowledged that she had, notwithstanding her moral life, no knowledge of her acceptance with God, or of the pardon of her sins; but she said that we are sure to get it if we are only earnest enough. The gentleman asked her if she was to go to the bank and ask for twenty pounds very earnestly, would the banker be likely to give it to her? She acknowledged that inasfar as she had no money laid up in the bank, and therefore no right to plead, her earnestness would not help her. The banker was there to do what was right, and would only give money to those who had a right to receive it.

The gentleman then said, "Suppose that you know a kind and wealthy gentleman who has plenty of money in this bank, and who, besides, is interested in you. Well, suppose you go to him and tell him your need, and, after he has heard you out, he smiles and says, 'Now you have done me the greatest favor you could have done me, for I feel it such a pleasure to help you.' And so saying he fills up an order out of his bank-book instructing the banker to pay you twenty pounds on demand, and to charge the same to his account. Now what would you do with that little bit of paper that he gave you?"

"I would take it to the bank and get the money," she said.

"But would you not need to ask for the money very earnestly?"

"No, no," she replied, "the bit of paper would be plenty of itself."

"Yes, certainly, everything depends on that bit of paper, and the *name* that is written on it. If you take the paper with you, you will at once get the money for the sake of him whose name is written at the bottom of it; but if you go without the paper, all your earnest asking will be quite useless, and why? Because it would not be right in the banker to give it to you. The banker, you see, will give you nothing for your own sake, but he will give you any amount your friend pleases, for your friend's sake."

"And now," he continued, "I wish you to attend very carefully to the application of this little parable to the subject we were speaking about Do you know that you have nothing at all in God's bank, and that it is quite out of the question for you to expect such great blessings as forgiveness of sins, and such like, when you ask them in your name, however earnest you may ask? Ah, my friend, your name has as little weight in God's bank as it has in man's bank. Now, it is a blessed fact that God is willing to give to the sinner—nay, that he delights in giving; but then he will give us only in a way that is just and righteous. In order that there might be such a way for God to forgive our sins, and to bless ourselves, he sent his beloved Son to bear our sins himself, and thus to become the Author of eternal salvation to all who believe in his name. And now, since the Lord Jesus has done all this, God is quite ready to pardon and to bless any sinner at once; but it must be clearly understood, that what he gives us he gives us only for *Jesus' sake* and not for our *own*. Now, you have been all along completely setting aside the name of the Lord Jesus; and when you did go to ask anything from God you have been expecting to get it, not for Christ's sake, but for the sake of your earnest praying."

This simple explanation of the plan of salvation, under the

Divine blessing caused the light to break in upon the mind of the inquirer. It is the same truth that converted Paul, and which alone can save any one, for under heaven or among men, there is no salvation but in the name of Jesus. When the light of God's law is flashing upon the conscience, it is only like the light of day being let in upon a dark and loathsome dungeon; it makes the prisoner feel worse than before, for it lets him see disgusting sights that the darkness hid from him. Light coming to us through the law, only enables us to see our vileness and to read our sentence of death pronounced upon us. But light coming from God to us through the cross, brings comfort and peace and joy; because it tells us of God both as the just Law-giver, and the Savior; and hence Paul said, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

The great obstacle in the way of the sinner coming to God, when his conscience is awakened, is the sight of his sins—formerly he made light of his sins; they were but a trifle—now he cries, "I have sinned beyond the hope of mercy." Before he could not be induced to fear, now cannot be persuaded to hope. See Paul sitting in darkness and distress for three days. He cannot sleep, he cannot eat. Oh how vile his past life appears! Only a short time before he thought himself a very pious man; now he feels that he is the worst man in the whole world. But hark! there is a footstep at the door. It is a messenger sent by God to comfort him. He tells him of the blood that cleanses from all sin, restores his sight, and the new convert, being filled with the Holy Spirit, goes forth to begin to work for Jesus, who has done so much for him. He conferred not with flesh and blood. Being baptised and added to the church, and having been called to the work of an apostle, he at once began to preach the faith which once he destroyed. The tongue of him who blasphemed the name of Jesus, is now eloquent in his praise, and glories in no other. How can we account for such a mighty change? It was not the result of delusion or imagination; nor could it be a desire for honor, nor wealth, nor power,

that induced him to make a mere profession of such a change, for he had to give up all these things in becoming a follower of Jesus. No, it was the power of God through the gospel that alone did it. And that same power still goes forth in its transforming energy, subduing the hardest hearts to the love of Christ.

Paul's cry had been, "Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?" When he got an answer to this question, he immediately proceeded to do what was required of him. He did not ask for light only to disobey its requirements. Fast as the Lord said to him, "This is the way," he was ready to walk in it. He did not think that his whole duty was done when he uttered the prayer; but was diligent in finding out the Lord's will, and equally so in doing it. There are many who utter such a prayer who refuse to do what the Lord points out because it is disagreeable to their natural feelings. This is dishonest praying. When we ask any thing of God we must be willing to have him answer it in his own way. He is infinitely wise and good, and his way of answering must be for our best good, in the end. When Paul followed out what the Lord would have him to do, it led him into great and peculiar trials. It led him into prison, and relentless persecutions, and personal sufferings, the mere recital of which causes our souls to shudder within us. So we often ask the Lord to make us holy and heavenly minded, and he answers us in a way that fills us with alarm, and looks more like judgments than loving answers to our supplications. By the death of friends, by the loss of property, by sickness and pain, and by other unexpected ways, God seeks to loose us from the world and draw us nearer to himself. "Be still and know that I am God.'

After his conversion, Paul lost no time in preaching Christ to the souls around him. He began in Damascus, where he continued for three years, excepting a short time spent in retirement in Arabia. He felt a strong solicitude for the souls of his own countrymen, the Jews, and poured out his prayers for their salvation with intense earnestness. With unremitting zeal, and untiring fidelity, he presents to their minds the gos-

pel of the grace of God in their synagogues and other places of public resort. In season and out of season, in public and in private, whether they would hear or forbear, he fails not, night and day with tears, to warn them of coming wrath if they continued in unbelief, and with all the tenderness of love to invite them to Jesus.

This love to souls is a common characteristic of converts to Jesus. So much is this the case, that if a man or woman professes to have come to the Savior, and yet does not at once begin to pray and to labor for the salvation of souls, especially for that of their own kindred, it is a sure sign that such a person is deceived or deceiving. It is true there are degrees in this love to souls according to the faith of the person converted. When it rises to a high degree of fervor, so as to become a ruling passion of the mind, it indicates a high state of piety. This was the case with Paul; with him it swayed and controlled his whole nature. He had a passion for souls. Most persons have a wish to obtain money because of what it can obtain, or of the good that can be done with it; but the miser has a controlling passion for it. His whole soul is given up to it. He loves to look at it, to count it over and to add to his heap day by day. So, in like manner, all Christians wish to see souls saved; for this they pray and labor to some extent. But there has always been a few choice spirits—a few elect souls of our race, whose love to souls has been so great as to cast all the common feelings and efforts of their fellow disciples far into the shade. Such was Paul. He had great sorrow and heaviness of heart for those yet in their sins. A whole city given over to idolatry stirred his soul to its very depth and brought forth from him an appeal so eloquent in its earnestness that it has moved the souls of men all the way down through the ages till the present hour.

The love of such men to the souls of the perishing gives us a very touching proof of the love of God. It is a little of his Spirit that produced such love for souls in the hearts of Paul, Luther, Calvin, Whitfield, Wesley, Carey, Judson, and hundreds of others; and if a little of God's Spirit produces such

love for sinners, O how great must be the love that dwells in the Divine bosom from whence that little flows forth. It is but a very little of God's spirit that the human heart can contain. One to whom God imparted much of himself, cried out, "Lord, stay thy hand; thy frail vessel can hold no more." More would have consumed the body of clay. How great then, is Infinite Love! God only knows the love of God." Only an infinite mind can fathom the infinite; well, therefore, might it be said of the Divine Love, that it "passeth knowledge." Still, we can know enough of it to change the heart from its natural enmity, to fill it with the confidence of faith, and to impart the peace that passeth all understanding.

Before leaving the subject of Paul's change of heart we must notice the full assurance of his faith. From the first moment of his receiving the Lord Jesus, till that moment when he laid his head on the block, he never seems to have had a doubt of his acceptance with God. He feels deeply his inward corruption of heart—the remains of sin yet unsubdued; he speaks strongly of his former sinful course, calling himself the chief of sinners, the least of all saints, and not worthy to be called an apostle; but never does he doubt the love of the Savior who called him by his grace. His language is always that of the confidence of faith. "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." "I *know* in whom I have believed." He does not live under a cloud of doubt, groping about amid clouds of uncertainty, writing bitter things against himself, and uttering a whine of fear for his future, instead of a strong, joyous shout of gospel gladness. Such is dishonoring to God and to our holy religion; and more likely to send men into the gloom of monks' cells or hermits' caves, than out into the world with the glowing, healthy love of a true Christian philanthropy.

The love of Christ was the grand constraining power that governed him, and all his movements among men were made that he "might save some." This gives a certain unity and purpose to all he does and says, that delights and charms us as we study his history. Whether we see him making tents, or standing before kings and making them tremble before his

manly appeals and impassioned eloquence, he is always the same.

Into whatever company he is thrown, he shows himself a master spirit. In circumstances that would depress others his brave heart is cheerful, and always rises to the necessities of the occasion. Whether standing on the deck of a ship swept by a tempest and drifting on a lee shore, or standing on Mars Hill surrounded by the philosophers and critics of the age, he is equally calm and self-possessed. There is a noble independence about him that makes him stand up before the profligate Agrippa and persecuting Roman officers as their judge rather than one put upon trial; shaking his chains proudly as badges of honor, and making wickedness and oppression shrink and tremble before the glance of his eye. And there was nothing either cynical or stoic in his nature. A more tender heart, and one more susceptible to the warm glow of friendship never beat in human bosom. A cold nature may be respected or feared, but seldom loved; but Paul drew warm hearts around him wherever he went—hearts that would have shed their blood for his welfare. We see the proof of this in the many scenes of parting tenderness recorded in the history of his missionary journeys and in his own words to his weeping friends, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?"

The labors of this great missionary of the Cross were brought to a close in Damascus, by a conspiracy among the Jews to take his life. He was no fanatic; he did not court danger nor unnecessarily expose his life to peril. He remembered the precept of our Lord, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another." Let down over the wall of the city in a basket, in the darkness of the night, he escaped from his enimies, and went to Jerusalem to form the acquaintance and enjoy the fellowship of the Christians in that city. The brethren there were somewhat shy in receiving him. They well remembered his former mad career of blood-thirsty vengeance; and perhaps not having received any satisfactory account of his conversion they were disposed to look coldly on his professions. We often pray for the conversion of great

sinners, and when God hears our prayers in this respect we find it hard to believe that he has really done so. Barnabas related to the brethren what the Lord had done for Paul, when he was cordially received by the church as a brother beloved.

His intercourse with them was of short duration. Persecution drove him from their improving society to Tarsus, his native city. Here he labored diligently in preaching the gospel, but with what success we are not told. At length Barnabas took him to Antioch, the capital of Syria, where they labored together for a year with great success. A large church was here gathered, and here it was that the word so dear to our hearts was first used to designate the people of God. The disciples of Jesus were first called, by way of reproach, Christians by the people of this city. Little did the man think who first used it, that it would become the most honored name on earth; and that in the great day of account, when all worldly titles shall be of no avail, this name properly applied to any one, will be a passport to immortal glory.

From this place Paul and Barnabas went forth upon a long missionary tour, after being set apart to the work by solemn prayer and fasting by the whole church. They arrived at another Antioch, a large city in Pisidia, where was a Jewish Synagogue, in which Paul delivered one of his most notable discourses.

As this is the first of his addresses of which we have any extended report, let us dwell for a moment on its chief points. And first we are struck with its appropriateness. Spoken to a Jewish audience, it at once secured their attention by recounting the dealings of God with their fathers; and sought their spiritual profit by a most skillful application of these historical facts to their present condition. With an affectionate manner, and in a way least likely to give offence, he introduces the saving doctrines of the cross. Then comes a direct personal appeal, and that faithful application of the truth to the conscience, without which the most eloquent sermon is only like flourishing a sword, without edge or point. He tells them that salvation by Jesus, is now brought very near to them: "Unto

you is the word of this salvation sent." The forgiveness of sin is offered them by faith in the blood shed on Calvary; and they are told of the utter impossibility of being justified by the deeds of the law. In closing up he tells them that the blessings of the gospel are for all, without distinction, whether Jews or Gentiles. (See Acts XIII: 38, 39.) In this discourse the apostle shows not only the skill of the orator but the faithfulness to souls and the whole hearted earnestness of the true minister of Jesus Christ. There is nothing unnecessary said, and nothing left out essential to the salvation of his hearers.

This discourse, of which we have only an out-line, was intended to be introductory to others, in which the truth as it is in Jesus would be more fully set forth. Earnest inquiry was awakened and a desire expressed for more instruction on the great gospel themes. It is worthy of notice, that this request came chiefly from the heathen portion of the hearers. The Jews who had been greatly favored of heaven, to whom the oracles of truth had been committed, and to whom in the first place the Savior had come, organized a strong opposition against the truth; so that next Sabbath, when the people came together in great numbers to hear Paul, these Jews "contradicted and blasphemed," and got up a furious persecution. The apostles met this emergency with great boldness and promptitude, and turning to the Jews, said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." And shaking off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them, they departed from the place. Paul swung loose from all the prejudices that might bind him to any one people or nation, and felt that the whole world was his parish; and that obligation was laid upon him to preach the gospel to the whole human race, as opportunity offered.

We cannot follow the great apostle through all his labors. We have seen him last among his own countrymen; let us now see him among the heathen. We see him enter Lystra as one earnestly desiring the good, both temporal and spiritual, of

the whole family of man. He felt himself as acting under the commission of Jehovah, as laid under obligations to preach the gospel to every creature; and hence he ignored all lines of distinction between tribes and nations and races of people; and in his own emphatic words, he felt himself "a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise."

In Lystra, Paul's first act awoke the attention, nay, the enthusiasm of the whole population. In the name and by the power of the Lord Jesus, he caused a man to walk who had been lame from his birth. This ignorant and benighted people gazed in wonder upon the apostles, and thought that the gods, according to their heathen notions, had come down in the form of men. Under this impression they were proceeding to offer them worship, the priest of Jupiter bringing forth victims to be sacrificed; when the apostles, filled with horror, rushed out among the people, exclaiming against the wickedness about to be done and assuring the people that they were only men, with all the common passions and imperfections of other men.

The remarks here made were adapted to the people. He does not begin by appealing to the sacred Scriptures, as he did when addressing the Jews; for of these they knew nothing. He bade them look at the book of creation, and to the great law of conscience written within them by the finger of God. He sought to lead them to God as the bountiful provider of all the blessings they enjoyed, and to turn them from their lying vanities to the Lord of heaven and of earth. We see how it was that this apostle became "all things unto all men," in order that he might save their souls.

Alas! how uncertain is the breath of human applause. Some persecuting Jews got among the people, and so poisoned their minds against Paul, that the very multitude that were going to worship him but a little before, now began to stone him; and dragging him out of their city, left him for dead. Dead he was not, however, for God had more work for him to do; and while some of the disciples stood sorrowfully around him, his consciousness returned, and he went back with them

PAUL AND BARNABAS AT ANTIOCH.

into the city. In a short time we again find him in his Master's service,—work from which no terrors of earth or hell could turn him aside.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES. [CONTINUED.]

Passing by many events of interest in the labors and travels of the great apostle, let us see him in Philippi, laboring in word and doctrine with great zeal. Under his labors many souls had been saved, churches planted and built up in the faith of the gospel. Guided by the Holy Spirit he had traversed a large part of Asia, till by means of a very solemn call he was led to cross into Europe and proclaim the good news in Macedonia.

At Philippi some remarkable events occurred. At a certain place set apart for prayer, and where many women were assembled, Paul preached the Gospel, and one of his hearers was brought to Jesus, proving the beginning of a large and flourishing church. The Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she attended to the things spoken by the messenger of heaven. She first became an eager hearer, and then a true believer; for "faith cometh by hearing." Others heard the same words spoken, but they let them pass as the idle wind, while she received the truth into an honest heart, and became an inheritor of eternal life. And, not only was she personally blessed, but a most precious blessing was brought through her to the members of her household. We do not know their numbers nor their ages; we only know that they were old enough to believe in Jesus, and to make an intelligent profession of that faith by being baptized, according to the Lord's command.

There was here a damsel who was possessed of a demon. She professed to have the power of divination, and, being a slave, brought her owners great gain. She followed Paul and his fellow-laborers with words of high approval, declaring publicly that they were the true servants of the living God. This was a cunning trick of the devil. He wished to make it appear

to the multitude, that the apostles were in league with this impostor, so that discredit might be brought upon the gospel. Paul defeated this design by commanding the evil spirit to come out of her. This was an unexpected blow to those who had reaped large pecuniary profits from her deceptions; and filled with rage, they stirred up the populace against the heralds of the gospel. For a mob to act unreasonably and unjustly does not surprise us; it is what we expect. But in this case the magistrates treated them basely. They condemned them without a fair trial, they caused them to be severely scourged, and with their bodies bleeding, casting them into a loathsome prison, had their feet made fast in the stocks. We might expect that under these circumstances the servants of the Lord would have been much depressed; but instead of that, they make the prison ring with their songs of praise to God and the Lamb. Our Lord told his followers that when persecuted for his sake, they should "rejoice and be exceeding glad;" and here was an illustration of this truth. All was discomfort without them, but all was peace within. Into that prison they carried two blessings that never fail to make their possessors happy—a good conscience, and the favor of God. With these, if it were possible for a man to go to hell itself, it would be a heaven to him.

The apostles sang praises and the prisoners heard them. The God of heaven also heard them, and appeared for their deliverance. An earthquake comes rumbling through the deep foundations of nature, shakes the prison to its foundation, while the jailor, aroused suddenly out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, because he supposed the prisoners had all escaped. But Paul arrested his wicked design by crying with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Then, after procuring a light, he came trembling, before them, with the words, which have broken from many a heart pierced by the sword of the Spirit, "What must I do to be saved?" Truly the most important question ever uttered by human lips; and he has come to the right quarter for an answer. He might

have gone to all the most brilliant orators and philosophers of Greece and Rome, and none of them could have given a reply, that would at once satisfy the deep spiritual wants of the soul, and at the same time be pleasing to God. But the answer given was beautiful in its heavenly simplicity: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

This man became a true convert. He brought the apostles out of their confined and painful condition, washed their bleeding bodies, and set before them needed refreshment. He also obeyed the Lord in the ordinance of baptism, in which he was joined by the members of his household, they also having joyfully received the truth.

And here we cannot but admire the wonderful simplicity of the gospel. Here is a man but a few moments before a hardened sinner, now a child of God. He felt himself a sinner, he wanted to be saved, and wanted to know how this could be done. He is sent upon no long pilgrimage; no severe penances are appointed him to endure; no methods of making himself better are spoken of; no long course of deep convictions and terrors, a kind of mental purgatory, are said to be necessary to fit him for Christ. No. Just as he is, without one moment's delay, he is told to believe in Christ as his Savior. The result was that there and then he obtained the pardon of his sins, and was received for Jesus' sake into the favor of God. He was not merely hoping to be saved when he came to die, but he knew that he *was* a saved man now. "He that believeth on the Son of God *hath* life;" and that life is eternal. It can never be taken from him. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

If Jesus has revealed himself as a Savior, that implies the eternal safety of every one who commits his soul to him. Here the soul can rest with unshaken confidence. Christ's work is perfect, and he who rests upon that work is perfectly saved. A man may know systems of theology, and preach them and contend for their truth, and yet, be lost forever; but to take Jesus by faith as his surety before God, is to have eternal life. Trust in Christ lies at the foundation of all true religion. This

only is the Divine plan of saving. It stands forth in the Bible as above all things in eternal importance. We can clearly see God's *hand* in creation, but if we would see his *heart*, and know how he feels towards us, we must see him in Christ. There we see a Father that can love us in all our misery and guilt; who has loved us with a love so vast as to astonish all heaven, and would astonish all earth, were it not for the unbelief of men.

On the cross we see Christ dying for the whole world, not for a particular class, or nation, or caste. Being love, God is the same to all. Love is his very nature, and goes towards the most unworthy. Whatever men may think, whatever they may say, whatever they may feel of fear and doubt, and almost despair, under a sense of their own unworthiness, yet, if they are ever to have peace here or hereafter, it must be by faith in God's love to them, as shown through Christ. Here only is peace and rest for the guilty sinner; a salvation full, free, boundless, and not depending upon the good that may be found in the sinner, but upon the perfect worthiness that may be found in Christ.

This love of God can never fail the trusting soul, for it reigns through righteousness. The law had said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Christ came forth to die in our stead. He condemned sin, honored the demands of the law by satisfying its every claim, and saves the sinner. This love is a holy love.

"On Jesus' cross this record's graved,
Let sin be damned, and sinners saved."

It is a love that acts in harmony with holiness and justice. And these attributes of God's nature are satisfied by the atonement that satisfies the conscience of the sinner. Ah! what can we say, as we look at this wonderful plan of mercy? We are at a loss for words, and can only use those of the world's Redeemer, "God *so* loved the world."

We must now proceed with our narrative of Paul's works of faith and labors of love. Passing over his visit to Thessalonica and Berea, let us see him at Athens. We associate with the name of Washington all that is great and noble in patriotism; and so to the mind of a learned heathen, the very men-

tion of Athens called up all that was great in the arts and the sciences. Thoughtful men and ardent minds from all the surrounding country resorted to that city, and in gardens and olive-shaded walks, as well as in its halls of learning, they discussed their various mental speculations, and listened to the teachings of the great philosophers of the age, with profound admiration. It was into this place that Paul came, bringing with him that which could alone make the people wise unto salvation. As a scholar and as a man of a highly cultivated mind, there was much in that proud city to interest him. Its splendid buildings, its beautiful temples, its sages, its poets, and orators, with its lofty fame and historic remembrances, were all calculated to attract the attention of a man of culture, like the apostle. But his heart was so filled with sorrow at the sight of a whole city given over to sin, that he could pay but little attention to mere sight-seeing. He looked upon them as probationers for eternity, not as the mere creatures of a day; and when he considered how rapidly that probation was coming to a close, he felt there was not a moment to lose. Hence he began to preach to them the blessed gospel of the grace of God.

Paul takes his stand upon Mars Hill, and around him gathers a mixed assembly. There are the philosophers of the opposing schools, the Cynic, the Stoic, and the Epicurian; some with a look of contempt upon their faces, and others giving expression to a bitter sneer, as they draw near to listen to the apostle. There stands that plain, earnest man, calm and self-possessed, and reposing, in that exciting hour of solemn responsibility, upon his Lord's promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And he soon showed them that he was no ignorant pretender who wanted to obtain a little brief notoriety. In the use of the closest logic and the dialectic art, he showed that he was perfectly at home. He quotes from their poets, and shows such a familiarity with their own literature as must have astonished them. He showed them that with all their intelligence and general knowledge in regard to the character of the true God, they were as ignorant as the

rudest barbarians. Their idol worship did not satisfy the strong longings and cravings of their souls after the Infinite; and in their blind groping about after the knowledge of something better, they erected a notable altar, inscribing upon it, "To THE UNKNOWN GOD." It was a bold step which Paul took when he exposed their superstitions, and presented to them the great truths of the gospel. He was there single-handed and alone. There were no friends to protect him, should his bold attack upon their ancestral religion, cause them to rush upon him with the fury of sudden passion. But he had faced too many mobs and been too often delivered to be afraid now; and even had he known that his last hour had come, he would not have shunned to declare unto them the whole truth.

Of the apostle's discourse on this occasion but a mere outline is reported. He sets forth the character and perfections of the true and living God, for such a knowledge must lie at the foundation of all acceptable worship. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." He showed them, also, that the great Creator presided, by an overruling and minute providence, over all the works of his hands. That all things, great or small, the affairs of an obscure individual or of vast communities, are all under his governmental sway; for in God we live, and move, and have our being. He taught them that this great Being was not far from any of them, striking thus at the very root of their false philosophy and idolatrous worship, and making them feel personally responsible for every act of their lives.

But he did not leave them here, else had they been little better than before. To know that God is ever near us, and that he holds us responsible for all the actions of our lives, can bring no peace to a sinner. We want to know if He loves us, and if He will pardon our sins. But Paul was not the man to leave out the gospel of Christ on such an important occasion. He was not preaching for the applause of his hearers, but for their profit. He was trying to win their souls, not their favor. In what he had said he was only clearing the way for the all-

important message of salvation. He preached to them a salvation already perfect; a plan of mercy existing in the Divine mind from all eternity, and now revealed to a guilty world by the death of Jesus upon the cross. This Jesus, of whom they were now hearing for the first time, died for them; his salvation was offered to them; it was in every way adapted to their wants, and without it they must perish.

What success attended this sermon? It is the old story that must be told in regard to that. Some mocked; some hesitated, wavered, were almost convinced, but delayed; and some promptly took Christ as their Savior. There is nothing that shows more clearly the awful depravity of the human heart, than the reception they give to the gospel, who hear it under the most favorable circumstances. The preacher may be the most able and earnest—a Paul, or even the Lord Jesus himself; the truths spoken may be as well adapted to the case of the hearer as Divine inspiration can make them; the evidence for the truth of the statements made may be invulnerable—the logic perfect in every shining link; the understanding of the hearer may be convinced, and even his conscience enlightened, so that he approves the truth to which he listens; and yet, so great is the opposition of the natural heart to the humbling plan of salvation, that not one soul would ever receive it, were it not for the power of the Holy Spirit, in applying the truth. This comforts the hearts of those who preach. No words that they can use, no arguments that they can advance, no power of human eloquence can convert souls; but there is a Divine Agent present who can apply the truth to the sinner's heart with mighty power. To the soul unenlightened by the Spirit, the gospel is treated as foolishness; but to those to whom it is brought with power, it is the wisdom of God.

That so few received the gospel in Athens, compared to some other places, is a solemn lesson as to the effect of pride of intellect in leading men to reject the Savior. Our Lord rejoiced in spirit, that the things which men wise in the estimation of the world despised, were clearly apprehended and loved, by those who might be called babes in knowledge; and

Paul said, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" A man must become as a little child in humility and simplicity of spirit, before he can enter Christ's holy kingdom. Many great and distinguished men have come to the adorable Savior, but they did not come as such, but as poor, lost sinners. And to all who come in that way the arms of his mercy are ever open. He will in no wise cast out.

We next find the apostles in Corinth. This was a large and populous city, abounding in wealth, and remarkable for the magnificence of many of its buildings. In regard to morality, its people were proverbial for their wickedness. As it was the mart of the world, luxury and dissipation abounded. It has been called the Paris of antiquity, because of its gayety and corruption. Its very religion was debasing, the principal deity which they worshiped being Venus, the goddess of licentiousness. Here Paul began to preach Christ crucified, first among the Jews, and when they rejected the truth, he turned to the Gentiles. He had at this time great distress and depression of mind. He says he was with them in much weakness, and in fear and trembling. No doubt the sight of the wickedness around him, the contempt and insult with which the name of his divine Master had been treated, and the slight prospect of doing any good there, tended to produce this effect upon his mind. He had evidently thought of leaving the place before his work was done; for the Lord appeared to him in a vision of the night, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this place."

Encouraged and emboldened by this promise, Paul continued to preach in this city for a year and six months; and with cheering success. A large church was gathered, to whom he afterwards addressed two epistles. Some of those who were converted had been among the lowest and most abandoned of the people of that wicked city, and thus became monuments of God's mercy, and of the efficacy of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin. Some persons of rank and influence

were also among the converts; such as Chrispus, a ruler of the synagogue. It was at this place that he wrote his epistles to the Thessalonians; and in the opinion of many, the epistle to the Galatians was also written in this city.

It was while in this place that he met with two persons of eminent piety, and well instructed in the Scriptures. These were Aquila and his wife, Priscilla. They had been banished from Rome on account of their love to the blessed gospel, and with them the apostle took up his abode, and supported himself, for a time, by working at his trade. This devoted Christian couple were truly patterns of all that is excellent in the walks of private life. In a quiet, unostentatious way they did good to all as they had opportunity, and their names find honorable mention in the sacred record, on several occasions. When Apollos, a man of great eloquence, but imperfectly informed as to the doctrines of Christ, began to preach where they lived, they took him to their quiet home and explained to him the way of the Lord clearly. They could not preach themselves, but they could make the plan of salvation plainer to one who had the gift of eloquence, and who could sway and interest the listening crowd. They could not reason and write like Paul, but they could give him the comforts of a home, cheer and comfort him by the warmth of a true Christian friendship, and hold up his hands by believing prayer. None need be idle in Christ's vineyard if they are only willing to do the work, however humble, that is laid to their hands

We next find the apostle in labors more abundant in the city of Ephesus. What a glorious sight is a powerful intellect, a strong will, and a persuasive eloquence, all devoted to the glory of God—the whole soul, body and spirit, given up to the Lord's service, as the great business of life. Such was Paul. No sooner does he see the cause of Christ established in one place, than he pushes on to enter another field of untouched heathenism. He does not pause to enjoy rest and the delights of fellowship with his Christian brethren, for which he had the highest relish, but presses forward to work while it is called to-day, and waiting for the long rest of heaven.

Ephesus was at one time regarded as the most splendid city in Asia Minor. There stood the Temple of Diana, said to have been four hundred and twenty-five feet in length, and two hundred and twenty feet in breadth. It had one hundred and twenty-seven pillars, each of which was sixty feet in height. It will be seen, then, that this city was one of the strong-holds of idolatry; and Paul remained longer here than at any other one place, as if determined to do what he could to establish a strong church of Christ there. In preaching the word of God it was evidently his plan to first plant strong churches in the large cities, as great centers of influence and power, from which the gospel would sound forth. Those places, especially where the most splendid temples were built to the gods, were the fields of moral labor where he most earnestly and perseveringly toiled. This accounts for his spending three whole years of his active life in Ephesus; and it was doubtless for the same reason that John spent so many years as pastor of the church there.

The apostle began his work of faith and love in this city by preaching in the synagogues of the Jews; and for three months, by powerful arguments and touching appeals, sought to bring them to Christ. But they were so filled with prejudices and enmity against the gospel that he left them, and in a public school in the city, preached to all who came in, the unsearchable riches of Christ. To arrest public attention and to confirm the truth, he was permitted to perform many miracles; such as healing all kinds of diseases, and casting out demons, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

In connection with this latter act a remarkable circumstance occurred. Some Jews who pretended to the power of casting out demons began to imitate Paul, and in their adjurations used the Savior's blessed name. The seven sons of a Jewish priest while doing this, were confounded by the evil spirit saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the possessed flew upon them with great fury, so that they had to flee from the house naked and wounded. This created a great sensation, both among the Jews and the Greeks, and a

solemn dread fell upon the minds of men. Great numbers were converted, and gave striking evidence of the reality of the change, by bringing forth their bad books and publicly committing them to the flames. As in this case the pecuniary sacrifice was very great, their sincerity could not be doubted.

I once saw a case of this kind occur in a powerful revival. A man had been converted, who was engaged in the sale of intoxicating drinks. Next morning he went into his bar room, after having had prayer with his family for the first time. He saw one after another of his bloated customers come in to get their accustomed morning potion; and as he thought of their present and future misery, the guilt of his business burst upon his mind in all its horror. He had his barrels of liquor rolled out into the street and their contents poured forth; and as the stream ran down the street, a dark torrent of death, many a prayer went up for the wretched victims of intemperance. Yes, in modern as well as in ancient times, the gospel is "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds."

Great good was being done in Ephesus; and, of course, Satan began to rage. The apostle described the state of things very aptly in the words, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Demetrius was a man, who made great profits by the worship of Diana, and fearing that if Paul was allowed to go on preaching his gains would be at an end, he gathered together a furious mob, who thirsted for the apostle's blood. We can nowhere get a better picture of an unreasoning mob than is here presented. There they are, filling the streets, heaving to and fro like the waves of the ocean, a sea of upturned faces inflamed with deadly hate, and shouting for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." No wonder that the apostle said he "fought with beasts at Ephesus."

When the time came that he must leave this place, it was evidently with feelings of deep sorrow that he parted from his dear Christian friends. His parting address to the elders of the church is most touching and affecting. He appealed to them as to the purity of his conduct while among them, and as to

the earnestness with which he had sought *them* not *theirs*. He told them that in his purposed journey, he knew only one thing, namely that bonds and affliction would be his portion; and then comes that noble and heroic statement, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

He then tells them that they should see his face no more; and warned them against the designs of evil men, who would seek to divide them, and lead them astray from the faith of the gospel. Then kneeling down he prayed with them, and they parted, to see each other no more on earth. The whole scene is most tender and affecting. They loved him and felt as if they could not give him up. They wept bitterly, fell upon his neck and kissed him, and felt as if their hearts would break, as they thought that they should see him no more on the shores of time. What a beautiful character we see in Paul! Firm as a rock where firmness is needed, and yet gentle and loving as a woman among his friends. His loving and affectionate spirit won the hearts of the people every where; and his terrible rebukes made the enemies of the truth to tremble. A warmer heart never beat in human bosom; and yet, where duty required, he could be severely stern, even to his friends.

Among all men he so lived and spoke as to be clear of their blood, in the great day of account.

Paul sailed from Miletus and landed at Tyre. Here he spent several days, comforting and edifying the church. One of his friends, who had the prophetic power, told him that he would be imprisoned and delivered over to the Roman power. He was urged by his brethren to give up his intended visit to Jerusalem; but he was not to be turned aside by the tears of friends or the threats of foes, when duty called him. Arrived at Jerusalem he took up his abode with an aged disciple named Mnason. He visited the apostle James, and in the presence of the elders told what a great work of grace God wrought, by his means, among the Gentiles. The church gave him a cor-

dial greeting and glorified God for the great good done by his ministry. The Jews were strongly prejudiced against him, and on his first public appearance raised a mob against him, beat him, and would have taken his life had not Lysias, a Roman officer, with armed men, come and rescued him out of their hands, and conducted him to the castle as a prisoner. Meantime the mob followed, shouting with great fury, as they did with his divine Master, "Away with him."

Paul got permission from the captain to speak to the people; and when they heard him address them in Hebrew, they were silent. We cannot dwell on this speech. He related his conversion, and referred to his past life as a zealous persecutor of the faith of Christ; but when he came to speak of his mission to the Gentiles, they broke out, crying, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!"

The Roman officer, wanting to know more of this prisoner, commanded him to be examined by scourging. Preparatory to that being done, the soldiers were binding him with thongs, when he turned to the centurion and quietly said, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" What a sudden change the words produce! They are startled as if a bolt of lightning had fallen in their midst. Hands drop and eyes stare; and fear, at what they had already done in binding him, showed itself in their countenances. In great haste a superior officer came in to ask Paul if it was indeed true, that he was a Roman citizen. He assured him that it was, and that he was free born. Thus Paul always stood up for his civil rights as a citizen, and on one occasion when these rights were trampled upon, he would not go out of prison, till the magistrates came in person and made an apology to him.

Next day the apostle was called before the Jewish Sanhedrim. The night before the Lord appeared before him, telling him to be of good cheer, and that he was to bear testimony for his name at Rome. No sooner had he begun to address the council, than Ananias, the high priest, commanded him to be struck upon the mouth. This was so manifestly unjust and insolent, that Paul turned to him and indignantly exclaimed.

"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall! for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" This was a well deserved rebuke; and we can imagine the glowing countenance and flashing eye with which the words were spoken. When told the official position of the man he rebuked, he partially apologized for his words; for it is often proper to show that respect to the office which we cannot feel for the man that holds it.

With a quick eye, Paul saw that the council was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees; and with great readiness he remarked that for his belief in the resurrection of the dead, he had been accused by his countrymen. As the Sadducees did not believe that there was any resurrection, nor any spiritual existence, there was a division and strife among them; the result of which was, that the prisoner was still left in the hands of the Roman governor. Finding that the Jews had formed a conspiracy to kill his wonderful prisoner, to protect whom he felt in honor bound, he sent him down, under a large military escort, to the Roman Castle at Cesarea.

The Jews still pursued him with relentless hatred. When Festus became governor of Judea, on his first visit to Jerusalem they brought great charges against Paul, and petitioned that he might be sent to that city, intending to murder him on the way. This plan was defeated, for Festus requested his accusers to appear at Cesarea. And when they did make their appearance, Festus, in order to please the Jews, wanted to send him to Jerusalem; but the apostle, seeing through the design, claimed the privilege, as a Roman citizen, to be tried before the emperor, and therefore boldly appealed unto Cæsar.

But before following him to Rome, let us notice his two public appearances—that before Felix and before King Agrippa. In regard to Felix, the Roman governor, Tacitus gives him this character: "In the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a King with the temper of a slave." And certainly all that history tells us of him, fully justifies this description. The woman that he called his wife, he had seduced from her own lawful husband. This was the man before whom

Paul was called to make his defence. The high priest, together with leading men among the Jews and a celebrated and eloquent lawyer, named Tertullus, were there as his accusers. The speech of this paid advocate against the apostle shows a good deal of ability, and in a very cunning way he mixes his charges, so as to make it appear that the prisoner had broken both the law of the Romans, and also the ecclesiastical law of the Jews. He spoke of him in the most contemptuous terms, as a pestilent fellow; and one in ignorance of the facts, might have supposed that Paul was the ring-leader of the mob, instead of being the innocent victim of its senseless rage and cruelty.

But Paul is upon his feet, and with all the tact and dignity of the perfect orator, begins his defense. By a clear and simple statement of facts, he exposes the falsehoods that had been uttered against him; till the tide of feeling turns in his favor, and his vindication is complete. Felix sent for Paul, some days after this, to hear more from him concerning the faith of Christ. The man of God, is not afraid of the vile libertine; nor has he any favors to ask of him. He no longer pleads his own case, but seeks to save the souls before him. What he said is not fully reported; but we are told that he reasoned so powerfully, and spoke so faithfully, on the matters of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, that Felix trembled before the majesty of the truth. Like all convicted sinners, when they are not honest in resolving to give up their sins, he delayed the matter to some more convenient time, as he called it, which time, alas! never came.

Before going to Rome, Paul had another opportunity of pleading the Savior's cause, before those whom the world calls great. King Agrippa and his wife Bernice paid a visit to Felix, at Cesarea, and having heard much of Paul, desired to see him for themselves. An appointment was made, the court was called together, the principal officers of the army and the leading men of the city were there, and in all the glory of official dignity appeared Agrippa and his court. Before this great and brilliant assembly the apostle was to make his defense. It was a great occasion, but he was equal to it. It is

PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

the proof of true genius, that it rises, without much seeming effort, to meet the calls that are made upon it, even when unexpected. How great and Christ-like the apostle seemed on that day! His manner is so dignified and respectful, and yet so manly and independent. He felt tenderly for the precious souls before him, and made strong efforts to carry their convictions of mind and heart for Christ. We cannot dwell upon the address. We have but an outline of it, yet fragmentary as it is, we love to read it over and over. He relates his conversion, and the solemn and miraculous events connected with it. As the stream of his eloquence rushes on, his hearers are much impressed. It is too much for the conscience of Festus—he can keep still no longer, but with a loud voice exclaims, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." An old trick of mad sinners is, to call those mad who seek to save them from the ruin upon which they are rushing. To this rude interruption Paul makes a graceful reply, assuring them that he spoke only the words of truth and soberness. Agrippa was a Jew, and therefore he makes to him the bold appeal, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." The King was much moved, and said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Nothing could be more apt and beautiful than the apostle's response: "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

On Paul's voyage to Rome, I need not dwell. It was stormy and tedious. The ship was crowded and unfit to put to sea; but Paul, though a prisoner, showed the power of a great master mind. In storm or in calm, in danger or in safety, he was always the same brave, joyful, self-denying spirit. When he was delivered over to the military commander at Rome, he was allowed the privilege of living in his own hired house, and he soon turned it into a place of prayer, and a place where Christians were confirmed in the faith and sinners converted. God did a great work by his servant in that city, so that the gospel found an entrance into the palace of Nero himself. How

wonderful are God's ways! He overrules the very wickedness of man to accomplish his designs of love. The fury of that mob at Jerusalem, and all the wrath of the Jews, only resulted in giving Paul opportunities of preaching Christ, in places and to persons, that he would not otherwise have had; and results in the conversion of some in the household of Cesar. After two years, he had his trial before the emperor and was set at liberty.

Paul then traveled, as before, for some years. He visited Spain, and some think France and Britain. He returned again to Rome, and, on some pretence, was cast into prison. During this imprisonment he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy, evidently expecting soon to die for the cause of Christ. Chrysostum says, that one of Nero's concubines was converted under the apostle's preaching; which so enraged the tyrant that he first sent him to prison, and soon after had him put to death. That he met the last enemy with triumph, we may know from the words he addressed to Timothy; "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He has long been with Christ; that Savior that he loved so dearly and served so faithfully on earth, has wiped all tears from his eyes; and in the joy of his presence, he forgets all the pains and the toils of the way. Let us follow him as he followed the adorable Redeemer. Such men are God's heroes.

"Not on the gory fields of fame
Their noble deeds were done;
Not in the sounds of earth's acclaim
Their fadeless crowns were won.
Not from the palaces of Kings,
Came the great souls, whose life-work flings
Luster o'er earth and time.

"For truth with tireless zeal they sought;
In joyless paths they trod;
Heedless of praise or blame they wrought,
And left the rest with God.
The lowest sphere was not disdained;
Where love could soothe or save
They went, by fearless faith sustained,
Nor knew their deeds were brave."

# PART II.

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## NONE BUT CHRIST;

OR

## The Sinner's Only Hope.

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"I bequeath to all my children, and to their children's children, to each of them a Bible, with this inscription: 'NONE BUT CHRIST.'"—*Dr. Harris.*

"Christ is all and in all."—*Paul.*

# NONE BUT CHRIST.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GREAT DELIVERANCE.

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Cor. 5 : 7,

It has been a universal custom among mankind to set up some monument or memorial to perpetuate the memory of important events or of distinguished persons. By them the memory of great events is kept alive in the world with all the vividness and power of a present reality. We hear the voice of Wisdom addressing us across the gulf of centuries, and feel that we are instructed by the solemn experiences of the past.

Who has not been deeply affected by looking upon some memorial of a dear friend? The eye that once beamed upon us with affection may now be dimmed in death, and the heart that beat with a quicker throb at the mention of our name may now be still in the grave; but as we look upon some little token of his friendship, his words, his looks, his many excellencies all come up before us with the freshness of his own living presence.

Our Heavenly Father makes use of this principle in our nature to impress upon us eternal things. In every age of the church's history he has been pleased, by symbols that appeal to the outward senses, to teach us important spiritual truth. Circumcision was established as a memorial of God's covenant with "The Father of the Faithful." When the river Jordan was parted, and a dry path made for the mighty hosts of God to pass over, twelve stones were set up like so many pillars as a memorial of God's tender care for his people. The Lord's Supper—a memorial of our Savior's death and of our personal

interest in it; the Lord's Day—a memorial of Christ's resurrection; and Baptism—a memorial of our deadness to the world and of our rising to the new life in Christ, are all illustrations of the same thing.

One of the greatest and most solemn festivals observed by the Jews, was that of the Passover. It was both *commemorative* and *typical.* It was commemorative of one of the greatest deliverances which God wrought out for his favored people. Through the instrumentality of Moses God had scourged Egypt with a succession of severe plagues, to soften the hard heart of Pharaoh; but these rebukes being resisted only hardened him more and more in his perverse opposition and his unrelenting tyranny. He drove Moses from his presence and threatened him with instant death should he ever again appear before him. The devoted servant of the Most High took the haughty oppressor at his word, and bade him a solemn farewell. And now God himself begins to deal with him. Before this, Jehovah had dealt with the haughty monarch through the medium of his chosen servant; but now it is no longer said, "Stretch out thy hand," or "Take the rod in thy hand," but it is said, "*I* will go out into the midst of Egypt." "And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne unto the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle," &c.—Ex. 12 : 29.

What a night of accumulated horrors must that have been! From house to house the destroying angel passes at the dark midnight hour, and parents see in bitterness of anguish the seal of death stamped upon the face of their first-born. The vivid description of the scene by the inspired penman is, "There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." To add to the horror, this calamity occurs in the darkness of the night, and is universal. It falls with equal force upon all ranks and conditions of society; and the palace rings with the voice of despair as well as the humblest abode of poverty. Amongst us, when the bereaved mother imprints

JESUS, MY KING.

her last kiss upon the brow of her dead, there are kind friends around to support her by their sympathies; but here there was no such comfort, for all were wrapt up in their own bitter sorrow, and sharers in one general calamity.

But the houses of the children of Israel were safe in that terrible night. God had warned them of the coming destruction, and told them of means which, if faithfully used, would place them in safety under the protection of Omnipotence. The means of safety were simple and within the reach of all. A lamb was to be slain, and the blood taken and put upon the side-posts of their doors; and wherever this was done the angel of death passed over, and the household was safe.

That the Passover was typical of Christ is abundantly evident from the Word of God. John 19:36. "These things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, a bone of him shall not be broken;" evidently referring to the Paschal lamb. And again, Paul said, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." Let us, then, endeavor to get some precious Gospel instruction from this ancient type of the Lamb of God.

It was doubtless in reference to the Paschal lamb that John the Baptist, who occupied a kind of middle place between the Old and the New Testament dispensations, pointed to Jesus and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." This title was given him, not only for his innocence, purity, meekness, and patience under suffering, but also to denote that he came as a sacrifice of greater dignity and worth than had ever been offered before. Hence he is called emphatically, and by way of preëminence, "The Lamb of God." To the great work of offering a sacrifice for the sins of men Jesus was appointed before the foundation of the world. This truth is clearly presented in the words of Peter, "Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world."

After man fell from the favor of God by rebellion, we are told, "Unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats

of skins,' no doubt the skins of animals slain in sacrifice, garments dyed in blood, and typical of the robe of Christ's righteousness which God has provided for fallen man; arrayed in which he will be found "without fault," even amid the purity of heaven and in the presence of the infinitely Holy One. We read also that "Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock a lamb," and as he saw its blood gushing forth, and gazed upon its dying struggles, he looked away by faith to the Lamb of God dying on Calvary. Hence he offered "a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and was accepted of the Father. Indeed, no soul has ever been saved in any other way than through the shed blood of the Redeemer, nor can ever be saved in any other way. Before the death of Christ men were saved by faith in a Savior *to come;* now men are saved by faith in a Savior who *has come.* The means of saving guilty man have always been the same, for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins."

The Paschal lamb was to be without blemish, a type of the sinless perfection of the Lamb of God. He was without blemish and without spot," and "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." His most bitter enemies could not accuse him of sin. Even Judas, the vile, black-hearted traitor, exclaimed, "I have betrayed innocent blood." The vacillating, time-serving Pilate says, "I find no fault in him." Jesus died innocent in a sense in which no being ever died before. Men have often died innocent of that particular crime for which they were condemned; but Jesus was absolutely faultless. With him every day was like a holy Sabbath, every scene was sanctified by prayer, every journey was to do good, every word was the outspeaking of truth and love. And yet the very race for whom he came to die treated him with the bitterest contempt and hatred. A minister, once, preaching on virtue, said that such was the inherent love of the human soul for goodness that if virtue were to come down from heaven personified, and walk through our earth, men would everywhere be found falling down before it and worshiping it Another minister preached in the same house and to the same

congregation in the evening of the same day, and referring to his statement, said that God had personified virtue in one whom he sent down among men in human form; that he lived among men, prayed for men, pitied and wept over them, constantly did good among them—and instead of men falling down and worshiping him, as his brother had said, they cried, "Away with him," and cruelly murdered him!

But what is still more wonderful, heaven itself seemed to turn against the Innocent One in the last dark hours of his life. It pleased the Father to bruise, and not to spare his beloved Son. Not only was a whole deluge of hatred from men and devils poured around his cross; but his Father, to whom he ever looked for comfort, withdrew from him. The face that had ever beamed upon him with love was now dark with wrath. Now, the people of God have generally died in triumph. Martyrs have sung in the flames, and shouted forth their cry of victory amid the worst pains that their enemies could inflict. But when the Lord of martyrs was dying, it was amid the deepest gloom; the darkened heavens and the shuddering earth being but a faint emblem of the state of his mind as he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

How can we explain this? Why did the Father forsake the Son whom he calls his "well-beloved," and with whom he said he was "well pleased?" The reason was, that as the Lamb of God he was bearing our sins. He was our substitute—he was bearing our penalty. There are only two classes of beings in the whole universe—the holy and the unholy. Now, when our transgressions were laid upon Jesus, he was numbered among the unholy. By imputation, he was at that moment the greatest sinner in the world; and as there must ever be a great gulf between the unholy and God, so when he stood in our stead he was forsaken of the Father, and the terrible curse due to our sin came upon him. He was treated as we deserved, in order that we might be treated as he deserved. He came to earth and took our sins, that we might take his righteousness and go to heaven. He was condemned for our sins, in which

he had no share, that we might be justified by his righteousness, in which we had no share. Ah! yes, whether we "stand up for Jesus" or not, he stood up for us, and those billows of wrath that shall overwhelm the souls of them that reject the Gospel beat upon him, while a rayless gloom surrounded him, like the blackness of darkness itself.

It was said of our Lord that "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Accordingly when he stood before his wicked and unreasonable accusers, he answered them not a word. Now, why was he silent? He was never silent when he had a poor, inquiring sinner to instruct; he was never silent when he had a prayer to offer for the guilty, even amid the darkness of the night and the solitude of the mountains; he was never silent when he had hypocrites to rebuke, and the honor and sanctity of his Father's house to defend? but when he stood at Pilate's bar, and they condemned him to death, he had not a word to say. Why was this? It was not because he was guilty, for, as we have shown, he was perfection itself. It was not because he could not speak with power, for when his enemies came to apprehend him a few words from his lips smote them to the earth as if smitten by a bolt from Heaven The true reason was that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all," and as the wages of sin is death, he had not a word to say why he should not die. He stood as a substitute, and instead of making excuses for sin, he bared his bosom and welcomed the stroke of Divine justice. He would not shift from himself the tremendous load of a world's guilt, but stood forth as our willing substitute.

On this point a clear writer says, "Let the glorious object of your contemplation, my fellow-sinner, be the *silent Savior*—silent when a reason was demanded why he should not suffer—silent when giving up his soul for you—silent when heaven and earth were about to express their horror at his awful suffering—silently, but willingly and readily pouring out his blood upon the altar of justice for your sin. What more is needed to make you free to the love of God? What more is needed to make

you free to look Jehovah humbly but confidingly in the face, and though vile and polluted, to cry, Abba, Father?"

When we undertake any enterprise we often do so in ignorance of the difficulties which we must encounter in its prosecution, and of the suffering which must be endured before we can bring it to a successful issue. We often hear men say, "If I had only known how much this undertaking would have cost me, I would never have entered upon it." But Jesus, from his lofty seat in the heavens, saw the whole of the dark and winding path of sorrow and suffering which he must tread in order to seek and save the lost. Not a pang that rent his holy heart, not an insult that was heaped upon his head, not a privation that he was called to endure, but were all known to him before he stepped from his throne to become a man of sorrows. From the manger to the grave, with all the fearful filling up of untold anguish, all was known to him; and yet he said, "Lo! I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God!"

There are some most important Gospel truths which we may learn from this ancient type of Jesus.

The only ground of safety for the Israelites, on that dreadful night, was *the blood upon their door-posts*. God's word was, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." It would have been in vain for them to have adopted any other plan of safety. They might have got the strongest iron bolts and bars for their doors; they might have surrounded their houses with numerous guards of armed men; they might have placed around the bed of the first-born the most skillful physicians; but all would have failed to ward off the bolt of death.

In like manner nothing can avail for the salvation of the sinner but the blood of Christ. We are told that Bengel, the great German scholar, when upon his death-bed, requested a dear friend to read to him the Sacred Scriptures. When the reader came to the passage, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin," the dying man stopped him, saying, "Add no more, it is enough, *I shall die on these words*." His vigorous and cultivated intellect had laid in vast stores of knowledge; he had gone the rounds of the sciences,

and pressed his way through the thick fog-banks of metaphysical and theological speculations, till he found the only safe resting place—faith in a Savior's death.

In the bloody struggle which took place before Sebastopol, a brave and pious artilleryman, Corporal Ure, was mortally wounded in the trenches. When his comrades went to seek for him they found him dead, with his Bible open at the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and his finger resting on the 5th verse: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Upon this glorious truth he pillowed his sinking head; from it his eyes, growing dim in death, discerned the light of immortality; and above the roar of battle his disembodied spirit ascended to be forever with the Lord.

I have somewhere read of a good man who in a dream of the night supposed himself to be at the gate of heaven. He saw a spirit, just released from the body, approaching for admittance. The angel who guarded the gate asked, "What title have you brought to enter this glorious place?" The spirit replied, "I am a rich man, I possess the title-deeds of many valuable estates and had great influence in the town where I dwelt." The reply was, "Those things belong to time, this is eternity;" and he was turned away in all of the horrors of despair. Another came, asking admission on the grounds that he had ever been honest and upright in his conduct, that in the place where he lived he was much esteemed, and that none could breathe a word against the integrity of his character The angel thrust him back with the remark, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." A third came, telling of his church-membership, his zeal for his party, the length and earnestness of his prayers, the warmth of his emotions and the depth and fervor of his feelings; but after listening to his *Christless experience*, the angel refused him admission with the remark, "There is no name given under heaven or among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Jesus." At length a spirit was seen winging its way

through the air, all the while crying, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." To it the gate of heaven flew wide open, and the angel said, "An abundant entrance is ministered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

There are untold thousands in this highly favored land who are making fearful mistakes here. You cannot long converse with them till you see that, however sound may be the creed to which they give their assent, in their hearts they are resting on other dependencies than the blood of Christ. A minister was lately urging upon an inquirer the vital importance of simple faith in Jesus, when he was answered thus: "I am aware that I can only be saved through Christ, but I have a great deal to do yet before I am fit to come to him." This is by no means a solitary case, and it shows that people may utter the words, "I can only be saved for the sake of Jesus," while they are cherishing hopes that lead down to hell. They imagine that they have a great deal to do themselves, a mighty fabric of religion to build up, to which it may be needful that Jesus should come in and give the finishing stroke. This is as insulting to God's grace as it would have been for the Israelites first to have barred and barricaded their doors, or removed the first-born to some other place for greater security, and then to have put a little of the blood upon their doorposts. Christ must be a complete Savior, or he will not save at all.

The blood on the lintels was of itself alone sufficient to secure peace. God did not add anything to it as necessary for security from the impending judgment; and for the Israelites to have added anything would have been to doubt his word and impugn his wisdom. God did not say, "When I see the blood and the unleavened bread or bitter herbs, I will pass over." He did not say, "When I see the blood and your penitence, and your prayers and good feelings, I will pass over." People get to mixing up so many things with the work of Christ, that they lose sight of the true ground of peace. When the Israelite firmly believed God's word, and applied

the blood, it gave him a solid peace, a settled conviction that all was safe. He would not go on hoping and fearing, doubting and trusting, but believing what God had said, he *knew* that he was safe. God had said that not one home would be injured—not one stroke from the avenging arm would fall upon any one who placed himself under the protection of the blood. So is it with the sinner now. Jesus has shed his blood, and by so doing has made a perfect atonement for sin. God has declared that with this he is fully satisfied, that the claims of justice are fully met, that he has nothing more against the sinner who trusts in his Son. It is not a matter of doubt or uncertainty at all, but one of positive assurance. The believer in Jesus is not a man who is merely hoping to be saved, or praying to be saved, or thinking that he stands a good chance of being saved; *he is saved.* "He that believeth on the Son of God *hath* eternal life." It is a *present* salvation.

The safety of the Israelite who had the blood of the lamb upon his lintels did not depend upon his previous good character, nor upon his emotions and feelings, but upon *the blood.* He did not need to look into himself to find a ground of comfort. No; his true ground of comfort was out of himself altogether. On this point an excellent writer says: "Now, we are constantly prone to look at something in ourselves, as necessary to form the ground of hope. We are apt to regard the work of the Spirit *in* us, rather than the work of Christ *for* us, as the foundation of our peace. This is a mistake. We know that the operations of the Spirit of God have their proper place in Christianity; but His work is never set forth as that on which our peace depends. The Holy Ghost did not make peace, but Christ did. The Holy Ghost is not said to be our peace, but Christ is. God did not send 'preaching peace' by the holy Ghost, but by Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost reveals Christ; He makes us to know, enjoy and feed upon Christ. Without Him we can neither see, hear, know, feel, experience, enjoy, nor exhibit aught of Christ. But the Spirit never teaches the soul to rest on his work for peace in the presence of Divine holiness. His office is to speak of Jesus

He can only present Christ's work as the solid basis on which the soul must rest forever."

It is evident that according to the Israelite's faith in the word of God concerning the blood, would be his peace. If, as he heard the rush of the angel's wing sweeping past, and the wail of the bereaved borne to his ears, he began to tremble and to doubt, it could only be because his faith in God's word concerning the blood was failing. As long as his faith in that was firm, his confidence would be as unshaken as a rock. So with the believer in the precious blood of Christ. Has he doubts and fears? Has he heart-sinkings in the prospect of going into eternity? Has he great fluctuations of feeling—now joyful, and then desponding? It is because he does not with unshaken faith repose in the efficacy of Christ's precious blood.

When our blessed Lord went away from the house of Zaccheus, he left a precious blessing behind him. It was not gold nor silver, nor worldly honors; it was SALVATION. "This day hath salvation come to thy house." Christian parents, the destroying Angel of Death is abroad in the land—is entering many a lovely home, and snatching away many a cherished object of parental affection. Are you making an effort to place your loved ones under the protection of the Savior's blood? As soon as they come to years of responsibility, do you regard their salvation as paramount to everything else? Ah! thus only can you recover them as they scatter from you, and meet at last a whole family in heaven.

Sinner, you are rejecting the Savior's blood, and in your present state your destruction is sure. Death may arrest you at any moment, and to you hell follows in his steps. To the guilt of breaking God's holy law, you are every day adding the fearful guilt of rejecting the tender love of Jesus, and trampling under your feet his most precious blood. All around you is changing. The hand of death and decay will touch everything earthly that you cling to, and it will perish from your sight. Already the loved companions of your early days are nearly all gone. The green grass waves mournfully over the graves

of many that you loved. If you place your trust in anything earthly, you lean upon a broken reed. Trust in friends, and they may die and leave you, or prove false to you. Trust in riches, and they may make to themselves wings and fly away. Trust to reputation, and a false tongue may blast it in a few moments. But trust in Jesus, and you have a friend, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

You may feel alone in the world—a stranger among strangers; you may feel poor and friendless; but the blessed Savior loves you, and is a friend to you—your *best friend.* Oh! do not flee from him! Do not cast from you such a wealth of love! The hand that was nailed to the cross for you is stretched out to save you. It is strong to save, but it is also strong to smite. Bleeding love despised will bring down eternal ruin on your head.

Oh! what will you do without the Savior's presence when you come to die? I see your pale, frightened countenance, as you lie upon a bed of death. I see your anxious look, as the world fast recedes from your view. Friends gaze at you through their tears, but cannot die for you. Your physician can do no more for you. Your heart struggles wildly under the grasp of death. Eternity is drawing very near to your view. In another moment, with all your sins upon your soul, you will be before God. Oh! what will you do without a Savior to plead for you—without his precious blood to wash away your guilt, and without his strong arm to lean upon as you go through the dark valley.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRUE REFUGE.

"And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger."
Numbers, 35 12.

To those who believe, Christ is truly precious. His name, which thrills all heaven with rapture, never falls upon their ears without awakening the most pleasing emotions. As the miser never tires of gazing upon his long-hoarded and accumulating treasures; as the politician kindles into a glow of pleasure as he speaks of his favorite plans of legislation; as the mother's whole soul beams in her countenance and sparkles in her eyes as she hears of the excellencies of her darling child; and as the naturalist is filled with delight as he gazes upon nature's scenes of surpassing loveliness; so the Christian delights to speak of Christ, to think of him, and to honor him, as his habitual employment.

The Bible is full of figures and emblems, by which the Savior is represented. All nature has been ransacked to present him to us in his matchless worth. So much is this the case that there is scarcely a prominent object in nature with which his name is not linked. His holy offices are associated with almost every object around us, from the minutely small to the magnificently great.

As the rising sun dispels the darkness of night, we are reminded of the "Sun of Righteousness." As we greet the friends that love us, we are reminded of "the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." As we eat our daily bread, we are reminded of "the Bread of Life that cometh down from heaven." As we quench our thirst with nature's cooling beverage, we are invited to "the living water," of which if a man

drink he shall never thirst again. If we journey, we hear him say, "I am the way;" and when, with gladness returning, we enter our homes, we hear him say, "I am the door." If sick, he is a physician; if in solitude, he is always near; if poor, he is the true riches, the pearl of great price; and when we come to death and the grave, and all the sad memorials of mortality, we hear him say "I am the resurrection and the life."

I. The cities of refuge were instituted among the Jews by *divine direction.* (See Num. 35: 9–15.) When a man had undesignedly caused the death of a fellow-creature, he might flee to those cities, where he would be safe from the avenger of blood until the matter could be properly investigated. If it was found that he had committed deliberate murder, he was given up to the avenger of blood to be put to death; but if he was found innocent of any such intentional wrong, he remained secure in the city of refuge till the death of the high priest; but should he for a moment go out of the city or its suburbs, he placed himself beyond the protection of legal shelter, and might fall that moment under the avenging stroke of the destroyer.

Now, there can be no doubt that this institution among the Jews pointed directly to Christ. To understand Christ we have often to go back for counsel to Moses, and many of the most beautiful allusions of the New Testament are best read in the light reflected from the Old Testament. The law was a shadow of good things to come; and since the first moment that Christ was preached to fallen man in paradise till now, there has been but one true religion, and Christ has been its center. Adam, Abel and Enoch died in faith, pillowing their heads upon the truth as it is in Jesus, though but dimly discerned. Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah, were each saved by faith in the blood of Jesus; and as they saw the dying agonies of the sacrificial victim that was laid on the altar, they looked across the broad gulf of ages to "the Lamb of God" dying for the sins of the world.

It is doubtless in reference to the cities of refuge that the

prophet Zechariah said, "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope," and that Paul says, "That they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." Having fled to Jesus for refuge, they are represented as "being found in him."

See yonder man fleeing in hot haste across the open plain! He has been accessory to the death of a fellow-man, and the avenger of blood, with relentless hate, is upon his track. On he bounds with increasing speed, making direct for the nearest city of refuge, while his pursuer seems to gain upon him every moment. He looks over his shoulder, his countenance pale with terror, and sees his advancing foe, with the weapon of death gleaming in his hand. On yonder eminence stands the refuge, with its gates invitingly open. He is almost there;—a few moments more and he will be safe!

But suppose that when he gets within a few yards of the gate, he were to stop—to sit down and take his ease, while destruction came upon him like an armed man. Suppose that he concluded that he was now *so near* to the place of safety that there could be no reason for further haste—forgetting that not to those who were *near* the refuge, but to those who were *in it*, was the divine protection promised. We would wonder at the mad infatuation of such a man—permitting himself to perish under the very shadow of the place of safety.

My dear reader, if you are still out of Christ the case is your own. God gave you a holy, a perfect, a reasonable law—a law which simply asks the affections of your heart and the obedience of your life to him, to whom you owe all that makes life desirable. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This you have not done; you have forgotten God; you have taken your own way, in opposition to his, and you have returned enmity for love.

But this is not all, nor the worst. This God against whom you have rebelled, has sent his beloved Son to die for your sins. He bore the curse due to your offences; and at an expense of suffering of soul of which we can form no conception, he has come and offered you pardon, on terms easy to

rejected and despised the gracious offer! Every day of your life, since you first heard the Gospel invitation, you have been sending word to heaven that you would not have the world's Savior to rule over you. It stands so recorded in the book of God's remembrance now, while you are reading these lines; and there is not a devil in hell chargeable with the guilt with which you have every day been staining your soul—that of rejecting an offered Savior!

This guilt—enough, if unpardoned, to damn a world—is upon your soul now. The law pursues you with its tremendous curse. In Christ, the true refuge, you would be perfectly safe, for he has answered all the law's demands. But I see you stop short of Christ, to depend upon your own goodness, your repentance, your tears, your convictions, or your works. Parents, ministers, and Christian friends may feel that you are not far from the kingdom, and this may be true; but it is not those who are *near* to the Lord Jesus, but those who are *in* him that are safe.

II. By divine direction, the roads leading to the cities of refuge were to be *kept in good repair*, and *free from every incumbrance*. So every obstacle that stood between the returning sinner and God, the bleeding hands of Jesus have torn away. Amid all the truths that go to constitute universal truth, there is none so plain, so easily understood, as the plan of salvation. God's direction was, "Write the vision, and *make it plain;*" and accordingly it is made *so plain* that "he who runs may read." Yet so perverse is the human heart, that this very plainness is made a reason for rejecting it, and thousands of souls are stumbling to hell over the simplicity of the truth. When we tell sinners that there is nothing to do on their part but to believe in Jesus, they say, "That is too easy a way of being saved!" But to whom was it easy? Not to the Father, for he had to part with his well-beloved Son. Not to the Savior, for he had to drink the bitter cup of suffering to its dregs. It is made an easy way to the sinner; but not to his sins, for it comes to destroy them. It is not easy to his carnal affections and lusts, for it crucifies them. It is not easy

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to his pride, for it lays that in the dust. But to the repentant sinner, burdened with his guilt, and fleeing from the wrath to come, it is the glory of the Gospel that it is the plainest of all truths.

We are told that on one occasion unwonted joy filled the holy soul of the Savior. Now, he was emphatically the man of sorrows. He "bore our sorrows;" and because the fearful baptism of blood was ever before him, and the burden of perishing souls ever upon him, the marks of a premature old age rested upon his faded brow; so that before he had reached thirty years of age, the Jews thought him near fifty. But on the occasion referred to Jesus "rejoiced in spirit." What was the reason that this man of sorrows for once in his life rejoiced? "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The Lord rejoiced that the plan of salvation was such in its very nature that the wise in their own estimation—those who were puffed up with self-conceit, and with the teachings of a false philosophy—cannot see any beauty in the Gospel; while to those who have a teachable, honest, child-like desire to know the truth, it is at once revealed as the power of God to their salvation.

It is said that Wilberforce once took the great statesman, Pitt, to hear the celebrated Mr. Scott preach. The preacher's theme was the way by which a sinner can be saved; and it was presented with great plainness, fervor and earnestness. At the close of the service Pitt was asked what he thought of the sermon, when he replied, "I did not know what he was aiming at!" So true is it that the things of the Spirit are foolishness to the unrenewed man, and that "if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, through the pride, and worldliness, and unbelief of their hearts."

Suppose a man fleeing to the city of refuge were all at once to stop, refusing to go any further, because the way was too plain and easy; and that in order to his safety, it is necessary that he should have some obstacle to remove with his own hands. Should the avenger of blood come up and destroy

him while uttering such nonsense, you would say he perished a victim to his own folly. And when we urge the sinner to believe in Jesus as all that is needed to his salvation, and he refuses eternal life upon such terms, affirming that it is too easy, and that there must be something that he has first to do to fit him for coming to Christ; if eternal death overtakes him in the midst of his self-righteousness, he perishes—not because of some irresistible decree—not because there was no Savior for him—not that heaven-made barriers were in his way, for there were none; but simply because he would not believe the testimony of God concerning his Son.

Perhaps we could nowhere find a better picture of the religion of human nature, the religion of form and ceremony, than is to be found in the words of Dr. Wiseman. He says: "Let us be laid in our shroud, with that cross at which evil spirits tremble grasped in our hands; let the poor brethren of some pious guild bear us, with psalms of penancy mournfully sung as for a brother, to our common place of rest—the holy field, consecrated by most solemn rites; let the standard of Christ be born before us, as the emblem of victory over the grave; let the church recite over us her touching prayers for our deliverance and rest, and the very earth which, sprinkled with blessed water, falls heavy upon our coffin, shall seem rich with her benedictions, embalming our remains beyond Egypt's skill for a glorious resurrection."

Such is the language of the religion of form, of sacramentalism, and of *churchianity*. It passes by the true spiritual doctrines of the Cross, to trust in the sign of the Cross, or in the wooden cross. It passes by the precious blood of Christ, to rest on the efficacy of holy water; and it neglects the intercessions of the Great Advocate, to rest on the prayers of the priest and of departed spirits. It is the vain, proud out-gushings of fallen human nature striving to be its own savior.

The cities of refuge were so placed that they could be reached in *a short time* from any part of the land. Christ is represented as being nigh at hand, and not afar off. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart," is true of the greatest

sinner, the moment he believes in Christ's work. It is not necessary to raise wild and clamorous cries, as if He were at a great distance, and had to be brought nigh. It is not needful to wait till special meetings for the revival of religion are held in your neighborhood. You need not wander about from meeting to meeting, and from minister to minister, seeking Christ. He is nigh thee. He says, "Behold I stand *at* the door and knock." He has come the length of the door, and there is nothing between you and Christ but that door, which you yourself have *shut* and *barred*. He invites you to open the door of your heart. He will not *break* it open. Recognizing your free agency, he will not force you, but sends his Word and his Spirit, to press you with the mightiest motives. The power that he applies to a planet and to a mind are widely different. He treats mind *as mind*, and not as a machine; and hence, by the persuasive voice of love, he asks the sinner to open his heart. The bar is on the sinner's side of the door, and he must open before the Lord will enter. Oh! now, before he turns away from you forever, withdraw the bar of unbelief, and welcome Christ to your heart as your all and in all.

III. The gates of the cities of refuge stood open *night and day*. Christ is as little confined to times as he is to places. "He slumbereth not nor sleepeth," and whether the application is made to him at *noon* by Jacob's Well, or at midnight in the tottering prison at Ephesus, he "in no wise casts out." Were there but one day in the year, or even one hour in the day, when he would receive sinners, how many must perish before that favorable time arrived! But, blessed be God! from the moment the sinner lands on the shores of time, till that moment when eternal realities open upon his view, there is not a single second of time when, if he trusts in Jesus, his confidence will be rejected.

And yet the sinner may arrive at a period in the future when it will be too late. If he persists in his impenitence, a time will come when Christ's door of mercy, though open to others, will be shut against him; and when, in despairing accents, he begins to cry "Lord, Lord open to me!" the calm voice

of justice and truth from within will answer, "I never knew you!" What sorrow and mortification have we seen depicted on the face of some traveler, when, panting and in hot haste, he has arrived at the railroad depot, or the steamboat wharf, just one moment too late! But no imagination can conceive —no eloquence nor poetry describe the anguish of spirit, the despair and horror of soul of that man who awakes to the value of Christ's salvation one moment too late! "When *once* the Master of the house has shut the door," an eternity of prayer and an ocean of tears would not open it.

IV. At all the cross-roads leading to the cities of refuge there were finger-posts erected, upon which were inscribed, in large and legible characters, the words "Refuge! Refuge!" This is the great business of the gospel ministry. The ministry was not appointed for the purpose of delivering mere intellectual lectures, or reading moral essays; it was not instituted for the promotion of party politics, nor to be a channel through which to convey the news of the week, by what is called "preaching on the times." The Sabbath is not set apart merely for the cultivation of the intellect, nor for the purpose of enjoying an intellectual treat. There are six days when that work can be attended to, but God's holy day is specially set apart for the *cultivation of the heart.* The heart can only be made better through faith in Jesus, and hence the great work of the gospel ministry is to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

It is a good rule that there should be enough of the gospel in every sermon to save the soul of any hearer present, who may be listening to it for the first or for the last time. And yet, alas! how little of Christ is preached in many pulpits that are called orthodox! It is too often taken for granted that the people know all about the gospel, and that themes of greater novelty must be handled in order to interest them. That the people were very much interested, or that it was an interesting sermon, seems by many to be regarded as the height of success. Now there is no one topic upon which the great masses of the people are more ignorant and need more to be instructed, than

the plan of salvation; and this is true not of one class only, but of all. Persons who move in the most intelligent circles—graduates of colleges, eloquent orators, able statesmen, men of acute and discriminating minds—are found as ignorant of the way in which a sinner can be justified before God, as the most benighted heathen, without having the same excuse for their darkness.

When ministers find such persons in their congregations, they are apt to think that they must, in order to interest them, preach sermons of a high intellectual cast, pervaded by classical allusions and historical illustrations. This is a fatal mistake. All need to learn more of Christ crucified; and if a clear, and scriptural, and earnest presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus does not interest the mind, it never can be interested, for *spiritual good*, by any other means.

In all our congregations there are minds anxious to know what they must do to be saved. They watch the pulpit eagerly every Sabbath, to hear something that may explain to them how they are to become Christians. It is not splendid declamation, nor magnificent descriptions, nor metaphysical subtleties that they want to hear, but how a sinner can be justified before God. For this they watch for weeks and months, and often, alas! watch in vain. Oh! let us never, never forget that the great business of a Christian pulpit and of a Christian ministry is to point the sinner to the True Refuge.

How dreadful would be the guilt of the man who should erect a false finger-post, pointing the man-slayer in a wrong direction! And who can estimate the guilt of that man who, under the name of a Christian minister, tells the sinner that there is no danger—that there is no wrath to flee from, and consequently no need of a refuge! And equally great is his guilt who points the sinner for hope to sacraments and outward forms of religion, instead of pointing him to Christ. To lead men to trust in their feelings, in their spiritual emotions and experiences, in their alternations of depressing fears and rapturous joys, is equally guilty and dangerous. A religious experience that has no Christ in it is a worthless thing. When such an experi-

ence is related it amounts to this: "So and so I *felt*, and *therefore* I hope." How different from the gospel experience—"I *know* in whom I *have believed*."

A man once went out upon an island near the sea shore, which, though bare and quite accessible when the tide was out, was always covered with water when the tide was in. While reclining upon a rock, gazing out listlessly upon the ocean, he fell asleep. When he awoke the waters surrounded him on every side, and were every moment getting higher. All chance of escape seemed cut off. He could not swim, he had no boat, and no human ear was near to hear his despairing cry. The waters rose higher and higher. Death stared him in the face, and eternity seemed opening for him its solemn portals, when away in the distance a life-boat was seen approaching. Did he push the boat from him and despise the offered help? Did he refuse to enter the boat till he had counted the planks of which she was built, found out her age and her owner, and the full history of the persons by whom she was manned? Did he insist upon finding out how he came to be in danger, by getting a full explanation of the nature and cause of the tides of the ocean, before he would enter the boat? No, no! it is only in spiritual matters that men act so madly as that. He cast himself at once into the boat, exclaiming "Thank God! I am safe!"

Sinner, you are in peril, and the life-boat of salvation has come for you! It has rescued thousands from the perils of damnation;—it can save you! Oh! now, without one moment's delay, cast yourself into it, and you will be as safe as Omnipotence can make you. There are many ways by which you can obtain peace, but there is only one way by which you can obtain the peace that God will recognize as true and real —the peace that death cannot destroy nor judgment disturb, and that will be lasting as eternity. It is by faith in the merits of Jesus alone that such a peace can be obtained.

Suppose that a merchant in this city has sent a vessel out upon our lake, laden with a valuable cargo. Nearly all his worldly possessions are in that vessel, and she is not insured. Shortly after she leaves the harbor a terrific storm comes on,

and rages with unabated fury for some days. He can hear nothing from her. His mind is in a state of intense anxiety; —he can neither eat nor sleep. At length he gets a telegraphic dispatch from his captain that the vessel is in a safe place of refuge. He believes that message, and at once his mind has peace. But had he not believed it, his mind would have been as much distressed as ever. The message might be true—the wives and families of the sailors on board might be rejoicing in that truth; but his mind would be harassed with all the tortures of uncertainty, simply because of his unbelief.

So, my unconverted reader, there is nothing between you and peace but your refusal to believe God's word concerning the work of his Son. That Son has died for you; the Father has accepted his death as a ground upon which he can pardon you; he has sent you the message of reconciliation from the heavens, with the most satisfactory evidence of its authenticity; and now, with that very message in your hand, you remain in your sins and under condemnation, because you will not believe it! Others all around you—your dear friends, your neighbors, your former associates in sin—have believed the heaven-sent message, have fled to the refuge, and are safe; and yet as precious blood has been shed for you as was shed for them. God is as willing to bestow pardon and peace upon you as upon them; but your unbelief stands in the way of his mighty love filling your soul.

When we speak of unbelief, we do not mean a *blank state of mind*, in which there is no belief. Such a state of mind is impossible. The mind must rest upon something in the prospect of eternity, and when it does not receive truth it receives error. There is a sense, then, in which all men are believing, and according to the thing believed is the effect produced upon their hearts and lives. Adam believed Satan's lie, for example, and the belief of that lie about God's character converted or changed him from a good man into a bad man; and it is the rejection of Satan's lie, and the belief of God's truth concerning his Son, that alone can change man back into the image of God. Paul had as much faith before his conversion as he had

after it, but it was faith in falsehoods—it was faith in a hereditary piety, in forms and ceremonies, in zeal for his religion, and in a righteousness which was of the law. Faith in these falsehoods gave him a peace; for a false trust will give peace for a time, as well as the true trust. Hence he was very confident that he was on the way to heaven, while he was going straight down to hell. "I verily thought that I was doing God service." He was very sincere in his belief, but sincerity will not make error truth. A man might be very sincere in eating arsenic, believing it to be sugar, but his sincerity would not save him from death.

Faith, then, is just the entrance by which either truth or error finds a lodgment in the mind; and it is the same act of the mind by which both are believed, but the thing believed makes a difference wide as heaven from hell. When Paul received "the truth as it is in Jesus," with a mighty, melting and transforming power, it made him a new creature, and planted firmly in his soul—so firmly that neither earth nor hell could shake it—the good hope which maketh not ashamed.

My dear reader, let me entreat you to realize your danger, as long as you are out of the True Refuge. As soon as guilt is charged home upon the conscience of the sinner, it is natural for him to look about for an excuse for it. If you look into your own heart, you will detect yourself doing this, and be astonished to find how pleased you have been with yourself, at the very moment that God has been declaring you utterly vile! One fact brings this out most clearly, and that is the measure of peace which you have in your unsaved state. If a man acknowledges that he may be called into eternity at any moment and that he is as yet out of Christ; and if, notwithstanding this, you see that he has a measure of peace—and no man could rest even for one night who has not—from what does his peace spring but from *his own good opinion of himself!* Oh! proud sinner! God charges guilt, damning guilt upon you,—and yet you justify yourself, and thus condemn God! You may make what excuse you please for your unbelief and rejection of the Saviour; but, in the great name of my Master, I protest that I

SYMBOL OF THE NEW DISPENSATION.

know of no reason but your pride. Let that be cast away, and this moment you would accept of Christ's righteousness.

But if you will not hear, but brace up your guilty soul to contend with God, then know that he will soon bring you low. He will arise in his might, and be as a consuming fire to you. The day of vengeance cometh—the day of the fierceness of his wrath lingereth not. He will scatter the proud, for who can abide the day of his coming? Arrows of wrath will pierce where arrows of conviction could not, and the eternal displeasure of the Almighty will fall upon the soul made bare to receive it. Where shall the sinner flee then, when God ariseth to deal with him? Shall he flee to his companions in sin? Alas! they are in the same consternation as himself. Shall he flee to the caverns of the rocks? The rocks have melted away like wax before the face of the Judge. Oh! now flee to the Rock of Ages cleft for you, and then you will at last be received into a blessed home, where all that is pure becomes forever permanent.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE JUBILEE.

"A Jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you." Lev. 25 : 11.

None of all the Jewish festivals was so spirit-stirring as that of the Jubilee. It was an occasion of exceeding joy throughout the whole land, because it stood connected with the great day of atonement. If the welcome, long-looked-for notes of the trumpet, on the day of Jubilee, thrilled the whole nation with joy, it was because there had first been the shedding of sacrificial blood. If the wandering exile was permitted once more to gaze in delight upon the green hills and lovely valleys of his native land; if the slave was permitted to rejoice in emancipation; if the debtor felt himself free from all claims against him; if happy families received back into their circle long lost ones; if the poverty-stricken bankrupt gladly returned to his possessions again; it was all because atoning blood had been shed. God can bestow no joy upon a sinner, no blessing upon a rebel, except through the shedding of blood. It has been true ever since man became a sinners that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

It was on the eve of the great day of atonement that the year of Jubilee was to begin; and on the morning of that day, the high priest, having made an atonement for himself and his house, selected two goats and proceeded to cast lots upon them, as to which was to be slain as a sin-offering for the people, and which was to be let go as a scape-goat into the wilderness. The goat that had been selected as a sin-offering was then slain. The high priest, catching the flowing blood in a golden bowl, entered with it within the veil, into the holiest of all, where was the Shechinah, and sprinkled the blood of the victim on the mercy seat, in the awful presence of Jehovah.

The high priest then came forth, and going up to the living

goat, in the presence of all the people, put both his hands upon its head, and with much solemnity confessed the sins of the children of Israel. The goat was then let go into the wilderness. The scene is thus graphically described by Dr. Guthrie: "The congregation opens, the vast crowd divides, forming a lane that stretches away right from the tabernacle into the boundless desert. While every lip is sealed and every eye intent upon the ceremony, a man steps forth—a '*fit*' man, and taking hold of the victim, he leads it on and away through the parted crowd. All eyes followed them. Amid the haze of the burning sands and distant horizon their forms grow less and less, and at length vanish from the sight. He and that goat are now alone. They travel on and farther on, till, removed beyond the reach of any human eye, far off in the distant wilderness, nor man nor house in sight, he casts loose the sin-laden creature. And when, after the lapse of hours, the people descry a speck in the extreme distance, which draws nearer and nearer, until, in a solitary man who approaches the camp, they recognize the *fit* man who had led away the sin-laden victim, the people see, and we in figure also see, how our Lord, when he was made an offering for sin, took the load of our guilt upon him—bearing it away, as it were, to a land that was not known."

The great design of most of these Levitical institutions was to point to Christ. As Tyndal says, "They were a star-light of Christ." Through these types and figures, as the holy McCheyne says, "The Jews looked upon a veiled Saviour, whom they had never seen unveiled. We, under the New Testament, look upon an unveiled Saviour; and, going back on the Old, we can see far better than the Jews could the features and form of Jesus, the Beloved, under that veil."

I. It was not until these atoning sacrifices had been gone through that the period of Jubilee, or glad tidings, was proclaimed. And so it is only through the shedding of a Saviour's blood that God can proclaim "peace on earth and good will to man." This is a weary, sin-sick world. It is a vale of tears, that everywhere echoes the groans and sighs of suffering humanity. Human hearts are wrung with anguish from the cradle to

the grave. But God is not to blame for this. He has been at infinite pains to make men happy—to bring to our race a Jubilee of gladness. The poet has sung, and multitudes have echoed the sentiment with approval—"Man was made to mourn." But it is not true;—it is a foul libel upon the benevolent Creator, who made man to be happy. Man by his sins makes his own mourning. He madly dashes from him the cup of blessing held out to him by the hand of infinite Love, and then reaches out to seize the poison-cup of sin, and when writhing in the pain produced by his own folly most wickedly casts the blame on God.

God proclaims peace and joy to every sinner through the death of his Son. Before he believes in Jesus, no man has a right to be happy; and after he thus believes, no man has a right to be miserable. The religion of superstition is always one of fear and gloom, but the religion of Christ is ever one of peace and joy. Outward troubles and trials the believer may have, but these cannot harm him while all is peace within; for the vessel does not sink by the waves that dash *against* her, but by those that get *into* her. "With Christ in the vessel we smile at the storm;" and until Christ is in the soul, there is no power that can make man happy. His surroundings may be of the most pleasant kind; his every animal want may be gratified; he may be exalted upon the pinnacle of fame, and be a nation's idol; he may have all of the world's enjoyments that any one human heart can hold; and yet, if out of Christ, in his hours of solitude there will be heard coming up from the depths of that heart the bitter wail of anguish. Sir Walter Scott is a proof of the inability of the world to satisfy the soul. He had splendid talents, a world-wide fame, and a princely income—his profits from his writings in one year amounting to $75,000. His King conferred upon him titles and honors; his domestic relations were all that heart could wish; yet his closing days were very gloomy. "Death," he says, "has closed the dark avenue of love and friendship. I look on them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with monuments of those who were once dear to me, and with

no other wish than that it may open for me at no distant period." Again he says: "Some new object of complaint comes every moment. Sickness comes thicker and thicker; friends are fewer and fewer. The recollection of youth, health and powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor ground of comfort." Not long before he died, at his request, his daughter wheeled him up to his writing-desk and put the pen into his hand, but his fingers could no longer wield it. The tears rolled down his cheeks. "Take me back to my own room," he said; "there is no rest for Sir Walter but in the grave!" Campbell, the author of the "Pleasures of Hope," in his old age wrote: "I am alone in the world. My wife and the child of my hopes are dead; my surviving child is consigned to a living tomb [a lunatic asylum]; my last hopes are blighted. As for fame, it is a bubble that must soon burst. Earned for others, shared with others, it was sweet; but at my age, to my own solitary experience, it is bitter."

As a proof that no splendor of wealth, no glory of fame, no elegance of outward surroundings, can make the soul joyful without Christ, we have the case of the French infidel, Voltaire. He resided in a splendid mansion surrounded by all the luxury that heart could wish. Kings honored him, and princes and courtiers vied with each other for the pleasure of his society. His printed works were exceedingly popular; and he was so great an idol of the people that on one occasion the population of Paris took the horses from his carriage, and drew him in triumph around the city. Yet, in the midst of all this, listen to his own doleful words: "In man there is more wretchedness than in all other animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows he must die. If he enjoys a transient good, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate, and the globe contains rather carcases than men. I tremble at the review of this awful picture, and *I wish I had never been born.*"

Now take these dark and despairing words, and contrast them with those uttered by a true Christian, the Rev. Mr.

Halyburton, of Scotland. He was dying in poverty and in pain, with none of the outward surroundings of comfort which Voltaire possessed, and yet he says: "I shall shortly get a view of my God, and be able to praise him forever. Oh! the thoughts of an incarnate God are sweet and ravishing! I wonder that I enjoy such composure under all my bodily pains, and in view of death itself! What mercy that, having the use of reason, I can declare his goodness to my soul! I bless his name that I have found him, and I die rejoicing in him. *I bless God that ever I was born!* Oh! that I was where He is! I have a father and a mother in heaven, and ten brothers and sisters there, and I shall be the eleventh. Oh! there is a telling in this Providence, and I shall be telling it forever! *Blessed be God that ever I was born!*"

Yes, blessed be God! the atonement has been made, and the gospel trumpet sounds forth the joyful sound! And blessed are the people who know it in their own heart-experience. It tells us of the Chief of Saviours for the chief of sinners. It is the voice of love sounding in a world of hatred —the voice of truth in a world of falsehood—a voice of forgiveness to a world of condemned rebels. The sounds that came from Sinai were full of terror. Its fearful crashes, as they fell upon the ears of the people of Israel, made them quake with fear. When the shrill trumpet of war sends its blast through the land, it is not a joyful sound: it speaks of desolated homes, of weeping widows and orphans, of garments rolled in blood, and of the heavens glaring red with the reflection of burning cities. But the joyful sound that comes from Calvary tells of peace and good will from the throne of God. It hushes into a calm the stormy voice of conscience in the human soul, and speaks of pardon established upon eternal justice.

II. The Jubilee proclaimed *the extinction of debt.* To the poor man, pining away under the crushing weight of a debt which he was unable to meet, this would be an unspeakable comfort. That debt had pressed upon him by night and by day for many years. It had been his first thought in the morning—his last at night. He has thought, and planned, and toiled

to remove it, but all in vain; and a feeling of dark, sullen despair is beginning to settle down upon his soul, when the notes of the trumpet break upon his ear and proclaim his release. "Every creditor that lendeth aught unto his neighbor, shall release, he shall not exact it of his neighbor or of his brother, because it is called the Lord's release." Deut. 15: 2. With what delight would the "Lord's release" come to such a man! Now our sins are often in the Scriptures described as debts, and we have nothing with which to pay the mighty sum. Nay the debt is constantly accumulating against the sinner, and his every effort to pay it but adds to the sum total. As man's every breath is sin, and his every act one of rebellion, while rejecting the Saviour, he constantly adds to the debt which stands against him as the short period of his probation passes; and if his release depended upon his own efforts, his damnation would be sure.

But the gospel Jubilee proclaims the full remission of sin to all who believe. A way is opened up by which the whole debt can be discharged. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." Though more in number than the hairs upon our heads or the grains of sand upon the sea shore, not one sin need be left to burden or stain the soul. Indeed, if the blood of Christ removed every guilty stain but *one*, and left that to be removed by the sinner himself, he could never enter heaven. If all the sins of our lives were pardoned except those of one moment, that would bar against us the door of hope. An old writer says: "Were the holiest of men admitted into heaven, all but his little finger, and it depended upon himself to get that in, he could never enter." But as the waters of the flood covered the tops of the highest hills, so the blood of Christ covers our highest sins.

The pardon is *free* and *unconditional*. It is not "If you pay part of the debt, I will help you with the rest." There is no worthiness of personal character to be pleaded. We have but one recommendation—that we are lost sinners, and such Jesus came to save. Like David in the cave of Adullam, he "receives every one that feels in distress and is a debtor." Let

the following case illustrate the confidence of faith in him. A neighbor went into the room where a young lady was dying, a few hours before she expired. When asked how she felt this morning, she faintly replied, "I am going." "I trust," said the neighbor, "you have a good hope." "Oh no!" she replied, "I am not hoping—I am *certain*. MY SALVATION WAS FINISHED ON THE CROSS. I am going to Jesus; he is my hope."

III. The Jubilee proclaimed *the release of all prisoners*. Suppose a captive, far from home and friends, immured in a gloomy prison, loaded with chains, pining out his days in solitude and grief, and cut off from the sympathy of human kind. Dark and cheerless is his lot. Sometimes in imagination he breaks away from his prison-house—is once more in his loved home, receiving the kisses of his children and the warm welcome of his friends, and free as the mountain torrent that leaps from rock to rock. But he soon starts from his dream of delusion, and awakes to the reality of his condition. There are his damp, slimy prison walls, there is his filthy pallet of straw; there is his chain eating into his flesh, and there are the iron bars that shut him out from all hope. He loudly bewails his sad fate, and his bosom heaves with a sea of troubles; when, hark!—the sound of the Jubilee trumpet breaks upon his ears; his prison door grates upon its hinges; a messenger enters, and speaks that word which has music in it for every captive from the equator to the poles—LIBERTY! He is a free man! Oh! with what rapture does he look upon the blue heavens and the green earth, and breathe God's free air! That trumpet brought a joyful sound to him.

But this is only a faint type of the Gospel Jubilee. Men are described as "sold under sin," as "led captive by the devil at his will," as "prisoners of hope," and as "condemned already." Condemned! Oh! what a wretched condition! See that man on trial for his life. The witnesses have all given in their testimony, and his guilt is made to stand out as clear as day. The judge proceeds to pronounce the sentence of death. The criminal trembles in every joint; his countenance changes—now flushed, now deadly pale; till, at last overcome by his emotions,

he falls fainting upon the earth! He is borne back to his cell—condemned already! He is now dead in the eyes of the law. His execution may be deferred for a longer or shorter time, according to circumstances—but he is condemned!

Sinner, the case is your own. Your guilt stands out clear and distinct in the sight of God—proved in the court of heaven. The sentence has gone forth, with all its tremendous solemnity. You are condemned now. You may have supposed that your state was yet undecided—that you have occupied a kind of neutral ground, and that the day of death or of judgment must decide your condition. But this is a mistake. Unless you come to Christ your condition is as fixed, your destruction as certain, as that of the lost in the world of woe. For you there is still a Saviour—for them there is none; but in your present state you are under the same curse that rests upon them.

The Gospel Jubilee proclaims "deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." It says: "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And why is there no condemnation to such? Not because they have not been guilty—not because they were naturally better than others—not because their guilt was not clearly proved—not because the righteous Judge was not displeased with their guilt—not because they had a better character, or better feelings than others; but simply because they have trusted in Jesus, who bore the full penalty for them. There is no curse now upon them, for Jesus bore it: he took their place in the cell of the condemned that they might go free.

History tells us of one put upon his trial for a high crime. The court was crowded, and the multitude was excited. The evidence was clearly against the man at the bar; his friends had lost all hope, and the judge was about to pronounce sentence of death, when the criminal, who had been strangely calm throughout the whole, put his hand into his bosom and drew forth a pardon, signed by the King! So, in the great day of account, the bold challenge will be uttered—"Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And the people of God

will hold up their heads calmly and joyfully in that day; not because they were not sinners, or did not deserve condemnation, but because they fled to Jesus, who bore the punishment for them. "With his stripes we are healed."

IV. The Jubilee proclaimed *the freedom of every slave.* A Jew lost all power to retain a slave in bondage the moment the trumpet of Jubilee sent forth its joyful sound. In the course of the forty-nine years many had sunk into such poverty that they had sold themselves as bondmen. There is a strong instinctive dread of slavery in every human soul. We recoil from the very word with loathing. However prejudice, or party spirit, or self-interest may induce men to speak in favor of it when applied to others, these very men would start from it with horror if applied to themselves, their wives or their children. To be controlled in all things by the will of a poor, sinful fellow-creature, like ourselves; to be lashed by him, or sold like a beast of burden; to have neither home, nor children, nor possessions; to be a thing of bartar and gain in the public market—the intelligence of the mind and the religion of the heart, as well as the strength of the muscles, being extolled in order to add to the price: this is all so degrading that long centuries of the wrong can never so debase human beings as to make the slave in love with it. If we were every morning driven to our field of unrequited toil by the crack of the whip; if that mother might any moment have the babe torn from her bosom, and knocked down to the highest bidder; if your wife might be lashed till her quivering flesh hung like ribbons, and you durst not move a tongue nor lift a hand for her defence, then you would learn the value of liberty.

How bright and happy, then to the slave was the dawning of the Jubilee morning! His fetters fell off, and he belonged to himself. He could look up once more into the blue heavens and say, "I am *a man!*" When, many years ago, the slaves in the British Colonies were set free, a missionary describes the scenes of joy which he witnessed. On the evening before the day of liberation a large multitude of the slaves had assembled, to watch the coming of the hour of liberty. The time was

spent in prayer and praise till twelve o'clock approached. Then a deep silence fell upon the assembly. Nearer and nearer came the joyful moment. Every one could hear the throbbing of his own heart. The stillness was oppressive. At length twelve o'clock struck, and instantly there went up out of the the hearts of these free men one shout of gratitude, well pleasing, I doubt not, to the God of liberty.

But there is a worse slavery than that of the body, under which every Christless sinner is bound. It is the slavery of sin and Satan. The mere slave among men may have a free soul in a fettered body. Man's cruelty may oppress and torture the outward temple, but the immortal part within may be Christ's freeman. From the lashed, bleeding, mangled body of many an "Uncle Tom" has gone forth many an exulting, happy spirit, that Christ has made free. Many a man with a black face has had a white heart. But, oh! how sad when the soul is sold under sin, and given over to be the slave of the worst being in the whole universe; to be led captive by the devil at his will, so that when he utters his wishes they become the soul's laws, is to sink to the lowest depths of degradation! Yet this is the condition of every sinner who has not received the gospel.

> "He is the free man whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves besides."

He may be boasting that he is not in bondage to man, while he is bound by a chain forged in hell. He may be boasting of his citizenship in a free country, while he is a willing subject of Satan's kingdom. He may sing of liberty, and be willing to bleed and die for it, while he is the veriest slave of lust, and upholding, by his example and influence, Satan's vast, despotic throne of iniquity. We are told that the price of slaves has greatly fallen in the course of the onward march of passing events; but the father of lies has in every age bought his slaves very cheaply. Of this God takes notice, saying, "Ye have sold yourselves for a thing of naught."

One sells himself for the poor privilege of handling a little gold. For it he drudges and toils by night and day; for it he

crushes out the noblest affections of his soul, and sinks to the most paltry acts; and while his eyes are yet twinkling with greedy cunning, and he is forming brilliant plans for the future, God says, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" and his shrieking spirit goes into eternity with the words ringing in his ears, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Others sell their souls for a short life of pleasure. The gay party, the whirl and excitement of the ball-room, the attractions of the theatre, the constant round of dissipation, that turns night into day and day into night, absorb those faculties which God made for himself. Others sell their souls for the intoxicating bowl, and reel through the world, bloated, ghastly, raving caricatures of humanity, till they drop into hell. Others barter away their souls for a few puffs of the breath of human praise, or in miserable subserviency to the fashions of the world. Thus they go on — worse slaves than ever toiled on a plantation, or crouched tremblingly under the frown of the oppressor.

To all such Christ offers true, heaven-born, soul-liberty. Would to God that men had as high an appreciation of spiritual liberty as they have of that which is temporal. For liberty men have put forth deeds of noble daring that fill the soul with admiration, and have become the favorite theme of poetry and eloquence in every age; but when the world's Redeemer proclaims deliverance to every captive, how few embrace his offer and rejoice in their spiritual liberty! The proclamation of emancipation spread with the rapidity of lightning among the slaves, and created the wildest and most ecstatic joy; but slaves of sin can hear the sound of the gospel Jubilee with cold indifference.

Those whom Christ makes free from spiritual bondage are always deeply anxious for those still in bonds. Often have I seen the liberated slave mingle with his rejoicings for his own deliverance tears of sorrow for loved ones still in fetters. Yea, we have known such risk their own liberty, much as they valued it, to go back and seek the rescue of a wife, a child or a brother. So is it with Christ's people. They were once slaves of

sin, and they know the sweets of soul-liberty. In exact proportion to the power of religion in their own souls is their strong solicitude for the souls of the impenitent. Witness Paul's agony of earnestness, his strong cries and tears, for his brethren according to the flesh. David said—"Rivers of water run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law." Jeremiah exclaimed—"O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" The Rev. John Welch used often to rise in the night to pray for souls; and on one occasion his wife remonstrating with him, afraid that he would injure his health, he said, "Oh, woman! I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!" And John Knox, when in an agony of prayer for his beloved land, cried, "O God, give me Scotland or I die!"

In a town in England a new well was being dug, and was nearly completed. While one man was at the bottom, the earth caved in and buried him beneath an avalanche of sand and gravel. Instantly the wild alarm went forth, and all—mechanics, farmers, merchants, lawyers, ministers—hurried breathlessly to the rescue. Ropes, ladders, spades, shovels, all that could be wanted, were soon brought by eager and willing hands. "Save him! oh, save him!" was the general cry. They worked with desperate energy, till the sweat glittered like beads upon their brows, and their arms trembled with the exertion. At length a tin tube was thrust down, through which they shouted to the man to answer, if still alive; and his answer came back —"Alive, but make haste; it is fearful here!" And then with a shout of joy, they renewed their efforts; and when at last he was reached and saved, there went up a joyful cheer that seemed to smite against the very heavens: "He is saved! he is saved!" and the cry was taken up and echoed through every street and alley in the town. Was this too great earnestness, too much enthusiasm, about the life of one man? No; we will all acknowledge it was right. And if so, oh, what should be the fervor of our zeal, the energy of our efforts to save souls from hell!

Here it is that we see the peculiar solemnity and responsibility of the minister's work. It is his special business to publish the glad tidings of the gospel Jubilee; to stand between the Eternal God and the perishing, rushing on in hot haste to perdition, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God. The devoted John Sutcliff was right when he said, "Ministers will never do much till they begin to pull sinners out of the fire." If men were but the creatures of a day, whose knell was to be rung when the light of life forsook their eyes—if all were to be over with them when they reached the boundary line that separates time from eternity, the minister's work might be entered upon like any other intellectual effort put forth at the bar or in the senate house. But to stand up before a congregation of deathless souls, and to feel that to every one of them your message must prove the savor of life or of death; to know that this gospel you publish permits of no neutrality—that it lays hold of all men as soon as they land on the shores of time, and never relaxes its grasp till it leaves them angels before God or demons in hell; to know that you must meet every individual hearer before Heaven's tribunal, and render an account, not only of what you have said, but of the *motive* and *spirit* in which you have said it,—all this involves an amount of responsibility under which an angel might tremble, and would drive the holiest of God's servants to despair, were it not for the assurance that our sufficiency is of God."

V. The Jubilee proclaimed the *restoration of all forfeited property*. Property which had become alienated from its originial owners, in consequence of debt or any unfortunate circumstance, when the year of gladness arrived was all restored. We can easily imagine with what joy the scattered and poverty-stricken family would return to the old homestead, and again sit down under their own vine and fig tree. The cry, "Return every man to his possessions," would fall upon their parched hearts like the morning dew, and sound in their grateful ears like songs of victory.

And the gospel Jubilee invites us back to our forfeited possessions—"to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and

that fadeth not away." By our departure from God we had lost all that is valuable in the universe: the favor of God, the enjoyment of his love, the sweet communion of the soul with him—all lost! The bright hope of heaven, the calm peace of conscience, the confident repose of the soul upon divine promises—all lost through sin! But when we get near to Christ by faith, paradise is regained; we can look up to God and cry Abba, Father. His love fills our hearts till they are brimming over with gladness. The Holy Spirit, as a divine Comforter, takes possession of the soul, and an eternal house above is held in reserve for us and awaits our coming. In short, we find our all in Christ. As Dr. Cutler said when dying: "They ask me if I have new wiews of heaven or heavenly things. Heaven is Christ, and Christ is heaven. I shall be with Christ: that is what I think of." To such a happy soul it is said—"All is yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Sinner, remember that the Jubilee was but of short duration. It was soon over. The trumpet was not always to sound. In like manner your day of probation is short. The period within which you can be saved is fast hastening to a close. A loving God will not always follow you with entreaties, and expostulations, and promises. He will not be mocked. He will suddenly arrest you in the midst of your Christ-dishonoring career, and shut you up in hell; and the ears that have so often listened to the joyful sound of the gospel will hear the sentence of condemnation, and the doleful sounds of the world of woe.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LAW AND GOSPEL.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1 : 17.

God, as the great Governor of the Universe, has put everything under law. Things insignificantly little and things vastly great are put under laws that they must obey. The grain of sand under our feet, as well as the towering Alps; the drop of dew that glitters in the morning sun, as well as the vast ocean; the smallest flower that lifts up its modest head in the garden, as well as the tall cedar of Lebanon; the tiniest insect that flutters in the passing breeze, as well as the tallest archangel; the softest sound of the zephyr, as well as the thunder that rolls in majesty through the heavens—all are subject to laws adapted to their several natures. Nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind. He has left nothing to the guidance of a blind chance.

These laws are adapted to the nature of the creatures they are meant to control. Some of them are irresistible, and govern by force that must be obeyed. God speaks to the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther," and it obeys. He speaks to the earth and the planets, and they must obey the law of gravitation which he has appointed to them. He speaks to the irrational creatures, and they must obey the law of instinct which he has given them. But it is different with God's moral law, as applied to man. That appeals to man as an intelligent being, having a mind to understand its demands, a conscience to feel the power of its solemn sanctions, a heart to love it as perfectly just and good, and a will to render it a prompt obedience. This law does not compel obedience like the law of gravitation, else man would be a mere machine, like the vane on the house-top, that must turn as the wind blows it.

JESUS AND THE DOCTORS.

Man has a free will that may defy God's law and take the terrible consequence, or find in a holy submission to the Eternal Father the highest delight of which his nature is capable. Indeed, without the possession of this power there could be, in his case, neither sin nor virtue, neither praise nor blame. Well might the distinguished statesman, Webster, speak of man's personal responsibility to God as one of the greatest truths with which the mind can grapple. The power of free will may well fill us with awe.

Our Lord has given us an outline of this law—so brief as to be easily remembered by all, and yet so comprehensive as to include the whole of God's will: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy heart, and with all thy might, and thy neighbor as thyself." Such is the voice that comes to us from the heavens, from the great Arbiter of our destiny, the great Fountain of all good. We feel that it is a law good and reasonable in the highest degree; that is, our consciences acknowledge its justness, while our passions may hate it, struggle against its holy claims; and yet, upon a proper understanding, and a deep conviction of the far-reaching nature of God's law, our eternal all depends. It is generally acknowledged that souls must be convicted of sin before they will feel any desire to go to Christ; but they cannot be convicted of sin unless they understand the law through which "is the knowledge of sin." We must repent of sin; but how can we do so unless we understand intelligently what constitutes sin? Our Lord tells us that he will love most who has had most forgiven; and he only will feel that he has had most forgiven, who has the fullest conceptions of the spirituality and holiness of the divine law.

I. God's law takes cognizance of the internal as well as the external actions of men—of the feelings and emotions of the heart, as well as the actions of the life. In regard to the laws of men, they are generally confined to the outward act, because man cannot read the heart of his fellow-man. We may indeed form suspicions and conjectures in regard to others, but we cannot apply the law till there is the evidence of the actual deed.

A man may be a traitor in his heart, but man's law treats him as a loyal man till he commits the outward act. So a man may be a thief and a murderer in his heart, and yet human law will treat him as if honest and benevolent till convicted of some positive crime. But God's law plunges down into the deep secrets of man's moral nature, and flings a flood of light upon things that were buried up in darkness. God's law goes upon the principle that what we speak with our tongue, and do with our hands, and exhibit in our life, forms but a very small part of our moral character. There are dark passions of jealousy. and revenge, and hatred, and malignity, and lust, and wild ambition, that have dashed and surged through the soul, like big waves chasing each other across an angry and troubled sea, and yet have never found an outward expression. There are innumerable sins planned and resolved upon in the dark recesses of the heart, that have never been carried out, for want of power or opportunity, not for want of will, and God's law makes a record of these. The eternal voice thunders out, "God will bring every work into judgment, *with every secret thing*."

Men may think very lightly of these secret sins of the soul, but these form the true bases of character. Out of the heart come the issues of life, and the true tests of our being are to be found far more in what is *inward* than in what is *outward*, Actions pleasing, attractive, outwardly excellent, may spring from inward motives that are an abomination in the eyes of a holy God. The law draws a perfect likeness of the soul—a complete photograph of the inner man; and holding it up before the sinner, he must either confess the correctness of the likeness, and break down in repentance, or his soul will flame out in enmity against the law and its author.

The law extends its condemning power not only to what we *do*, but what we do *not do*. It registers our sins of omission, as well as our sins of commission. We are not merely to "cease to do evil," but to "learn to do well." The sinner may prove his own apologist, and exclaim, "What have I done?" But even if he could prove that he has done no positive wrong, the

fact that he has done no positive good will be enough to condemn him, and will thunder out in his ears—"Thou wicked and *slothful* servant!" He may not have blotted and stained the page of his life with dark crimes, but the fact that he has not made it a record of noble and godly deeds will be his condemnation.

How solemn and far-reaching, then, is the law! Like the Great Being from whom it emanated, it is "about our bed and about our path, and spies out all our ways." It permits of no neutral position. It interferes with all our doing, and thinking, and feeling, and makes all connected with us bear the stamp of its approval or its condemnation. From the first dawnings of responsibility till tottering old age it follows us, marking every step and searching with piercing gaze every secret spring of motive in the soul.

II. It follows from what we have said that the whole world is guilty in God's sight of having broken his law. We may go away back as far as we please, and search the most ancient records of nations, and we can find no race of people who served and loved God perfectly. Not one family—nay, not one solitary individual can be found who naturally grew up to perfect holiness, and rendered what the law demands—a spotless life. Where is the man who would dare to lay his hand upon his heart and say, while the pure eye of God looks him through and through, "I have never sinned?" Navigators and discoverers, with all their research, have never yet found a single spot of God's earth that sin had not defiled.

But on this point we have the very highest testimony—that of God himself. That Being who must know man's spiritual condition, and who cannot utter what is not true regarding him, and says of our race—"They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is not the verdict of an enemy, but of our best Friend. As you have heard a father speak of the faults of his prodigal son, his lips quivering with emotion, and the tears trembling in his eyes, and felt assured that he loved that son too well either to exaggerate his offences or to utter anything unnec-

essarily severe; so, when the loving God describes us as sinners —as corrupt to the very centre of our being—as even filled with enmity and hatred to himself, then it is time that every mouth should be stopped and all confess themselves guilty before God. It is true that education and refinement, and the influence of polished society joined to a naturally amiable disposition, may to a mere surface-observer make it appear as if God's verdict was too general and severe; but we should remember that a very rotten piece of wood may be handsomely painted and varnished, and that white and polished marble and fragrant flowers may cover the corruption of the grave. "Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart."

If a man can prove that he has always loved God with his whole heart and soul, then he is not a sinner, and the law does not condemn him; but if he cannot do this, then it is utter folly to put his obedience in some things over against his disobedience in other things, and try to make the one balance the other. As well might you say that a man's truthfulness yesterday will atone for his falsehood to-day, or that a man's honesty for a number of years would cancel the guilt of his becoming a thief. No, If we have broken the law even in one thing, its terrible curse comes upon us; we stand under the dark, frowning brows of Sinai, while the forked lightnings flash around us, and the bolt of death may at any moment strike us. Justice sternly points to the broken tablets of the holy law, and draws her inflexible sword. All apologies and excuses for sin are in vain. Who can testify for the sinner, when God testifies against him? His verdict of guilty has gone forth, and we cannot reverse it. Let man's lofty opinion of himself fall before the decisions of the Lord.

III. Here we may clearly see that sinners can never be saved by the law. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." It is not the province of the law to save, but to condemn—not to pardon, but to convict. As Dr. Arnot says, "The law never saved a sinner; if it did, it would be no longer a law. If it softened and yielded at any one point, it were absolutely annulled. If any sin or any sinner is allowed to pass, where is

the justice of punishing any sin or any sinner? To bend any commandment for the accommodation of a defaulter is to blot out the law. The law, by its very nature, can have no partialities and no compunctions. It never saves those who transgress, and never weeps for those who perish."

If a man has committed only one sin in the course of his whole life, for that one sin the law must inflict punishment. The rest of his life might be that of obedience. He might pour out tears and regrets over that one sin; but the rigorous, inflexible law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* that are written in the book of the law to do them." Suppose, for example, that a man commits a murder. He escapes from the officers of the law, who are in pursuit of him. He goes to another part of the country, and becomes in course of time a very respectable, law-abiding citizen. Fifty years may pass away, by which time he has risen to the highest positions of honor in the town where he resides. But he is discovered at last, put upon his trial, and condemned to die. Would it do for him to plead, as a reason why he should not be executed, that for fifty long years he had not killed a single man? Or would it do to plead his subsequent good life, his respectability, or his deep regrets for his crime? No; these things, however they might move our sympathies, would not satisfy the law. For the transgressor the law has nothing but vengeance: it never can extend the olive branch of peace.

Sinner, if you are ever saved, it cannot be by the deeds of the law—by your own goodness. How it can ever be expected by a reflecting mind that God's favor is to be obtained, his justice satisfied, and a heaven of purity secured by the outward performances of a sinful creature, is a mystery of self-delusion; and yet this is the first thought of the sinner when led to feel his lost condition. By fastings and prayer, by the bestowal of abundant charities, by a life of honesty and truthfulness, by the faithful discharge of social duties and a careful observance of religious forms, multitudes are seeking to secure a title to heaven. Many of them with great perseverance and energy carry their self-righteousness to the highest perfection. Kind

and amiable, refined and generous, filled with a fervent zeal for their church, and cultivating exalted religious emotions; we cannot but admire their conscientiousness, while we deeply bewail their delusion. If their plan of being saved is the right one, then the death of Jesus was unnecessary. They boldly ignore his work, and march up to the bar of a holy God, and proudly expect to stand upon their own merits. Oh, sinner! awake from this mad dream! You will not dare to say that you have never sinned; and if you had committed but one sin, you are under the curse of the law. God will not bring the law down to your standard, and you cannot lift yourself up to its demands of perfection. Occupying your present stand-point, you are a lost man. Unless you can be induced to change your ground, you are as sure of perdition as if already there.

IV. Here it is that the glorious gospel comes in. During the seige of Calais by Edward III. an incident occurred which may be used to illustrate the truth. The King had been engaged for a year in carrying on the siege, when at last the place surrendered, and the people asked the privilege of going out with their lives. Enraged at them for the stubbornness of their defence, which had so long baffled him, the monarch demanded that six of their principal citizens should come to him with the keys of the city, with their heads and feet bare and halters about their necks. Six brave men volunteered to go, when the King in a rage commanded them to be executed at once. The Queen, however, interceded for them, and obtained their pardon. She then took them to her own tent, bestowed upon them many presents of money and clothes, and sent them back to their friends. This was great kindness, but nothing to the love of God displayed in providing pardon for condemned sinners. These noble-hearted men deserved not to die, but sinners have fully merited eternal condemnation. God was the first to propose terms of mercy, and when he pardons, it is like himself, by adopting us into his family and making us his children.

Our lost and helpless condition under the curse of the law brought out a new word, the meaning of which we never could have understood unless man had fallen. It is the word GRACE.

God does not show grace to the sinless angels. He loves them and is good to them, and fills them with pure bliss, but he has never shown them grace, for they have never needed it. They have never sinned, and love and goodness are their due. Grace is something shown to the undeserving and the lost. Our sins, so far from disqualifying us for God's grace, form our only qualification for receiving it. Vast military hospitals are provided, and noble Christian women go there, and pour out the wealth of their sympathy in acts of kindness—not because they are well, but because they are sick. Their sickness is the thing that has called out all this kindness. So it is not because we are *so worthy*, but because we are *so worthless*, that God's grace comes to us. We did not go seeking it, it came seeking us. It went to the Jerusalem sinners in the midst of their guilt, to the Corinthians in the midst of their vileness, to the dying thief in his lost condition, and "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

But God does not use his grace to subvert his law, but in a way that establishes it. His grace and his government are found walking hand in hand. "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other," when God's own Son became our substitute, and bore the curse of the law for us. For us he was "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Our substitute voluntarily came forth and bared his bosom to the sword of Justice for us. "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself." Had there been compulsion in the matter, it would have been unjust, and could not, therefore, have met the claims of the law; and had he been a mere man, or even an angel, could he have paid the penalty? It was his Godhead, in connection with the humanity, that gave infinite efficacy to the sacrifice. So that when we look at the Cross we see the highest claims of the law fully met, and a way opened up by which the guiltiest sinner may go free. We can look up from the Cross and see a *satisfied* and a *well-pleased* God.

Hence Jesus is called "the Lord *our* righteousness." Oh! the glory and blessedness of that little word "our," in such a

connection! Still better when, by the faith of appropriation, we are able to say, "the Lord MY righteousness." When the poor soul looks at its own sins, it can find no comfort; when it looks up to a pure, sin-hating God, it can find no comfort; when it looks up to a holy heaven, with its faultless congregation, it can find no comfort; but when, by faith, it looks to Jesus, the great Substitute, paying the full penalty for sin, and can say, "He is MY righteousness!" all is comfort and peace. If God is satisfied with that, surely the sinner should be satisfied.

But the atonement not only satisfies the justice of God; it satisfies and brings peace to the trembling, guilty conscience. It was in the very nature of things, and according to the very constitution of man's nature, that he should tremble with guilty dread of God the moment he became a sinner. Just as surely as a magazine of powder will explode at the touch of a spark of fire, just so certain is it that remorse and fear will flame out from the human conscience when touched by sin. The indulgence of sin gives a terrible meaning to the word *remorse*. It is this that makes "the wicked flee when no man pursueth;" that makes the most hardened sinner, when suddenly confronted with death and judgment, send up his despairing cry to heaven, and strangely mingle his prayers and his blasphemies together. It is this that makes the murderer's life one of constant misery, though he may have escaped the vengeance of the law. The blood of a brother upon his conscience makes the whole universe all eyes to him—makes him tremble at the shaking of a leaf, or even the throbbings of his own guilty heart. It was the power of a conscious guilt that gave rise to the human sacrifices among the heathen, the bare recital of which fills us with horror. They offered the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.

Now the blood of Christ gives peace to the conscience—not by destroying its power or by causing it to lay aside its functions, but by giving it a perfect assurance that the claims of justice have all been met, and that the sins that lie like great mountains upon the conscience have all been atoned for. The very attributes of God, the contemplation of which shook the

soul with terror, such as justice and holiness, when viewed through the Cross, become objects of delight. Justice, instead of seeking his death, now that her claims are all satisfied, seeks his salvation; and holiness becomes not only the object of his admiration, but of his imitation. Conscience no longer looks into the future with a fearful looking-for of judgment, but with a blissful, calm serenity. The law can only gather a man's sins together in huge heaps, and leave them upon the conscience, to burden it; but the gospel takesthem away, and casts them into the depths of forgetfulness. The law sternly points out the right, and says "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not;" but the gospel says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" "Ah!" says Conscience. "if the sin of the *world*, then surely *my* sin!"

There are, alas! multitudes of professing Christians who are living half way, as it were, between the law and the gospel. Now they listen to the thunder tones of the law, in its perfect requirements and its tremendous sanctions, and they are filled with trembling dread; and then they listen for a little to the still, small voice of Calvary, and they are a little comforted. One day they are examining themselves, to see how near they can come to a satisfaction of the law's demands; and then they are filled with doubts and fears, and are ready to give up all for lost. Next day they cast a glance at the up-lifted Saviour, and have a little more confidence. Thus they keep wavering between Moses and Christ, between the law and the gospel, and are doubters, hopers, waverers, but never true, rejoicing believers. They do not fully understand either the law or the gospel. If they understood the law fully, it would drive them to Christ, never to leave him; and if they understood Christ fully, they would see no need of seeking justification by the deeds of the law. "The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ."

My dear reader, let me entreat you to abandon all hope of saving yourself. You might as well attempt to walk upon the pathless sea, or to soar to unexplored worlds above us, as to rise

into God's favor out of Christ. The truths I have been urging upon you have not the charm of novelty—you may often have heard them before; but if you do not personally and practically receive them, that will only increase your condemnation. I believe it is Coleridge who says: "To restore a common-place truth to its first uncommon power you need only translate it into action." Obey the gospel by a personal application, by faith, of its truths, and it will put a *new* song in your mouth, new views of God in your mind, and new joys and emotions in your heart. It will make you "*a new creature* in Christ Jesus."

A hearty, full confidence in Jesus is what is alone well-pleasing to God. When the Elector of Hanover was newly chosen, a number of gentlemen waited upon him, to make application for offices. Several had their requests granted, and confirmed by a promissory note. At length one gentleman was appointed to the Mastership of the Rolls, and the Elector was about to give him the usual note, when the gentleman requested him not to put himself to the trouble, as he regarded his Highness' *word* as the very best assurance he could have. The Elector, we are told, was delighted with this confidence reposed in him, and said, "This is the gentleman who does me a real honor—treats me *like a King;* and whoever is disappointed, he shall certainly be gratified." Thus God is well-pleased to have his word trusted, and faith glorifies and honors him. It takes hold of his princely word, and deems that all-sufficient.

On this point the Rev. Ralph Erskine says: "Faith takes hold of Christ in his love, and the proof of this love as magnified in the word, and says, 'Oh, here is a letter from heaven! —the gospel of Christ! giving an account of his love; and I see the letter is backed and endorsed *for me*, a guilty sinner, the chief of sinners; and the letter bears a command to me, to receive this letter to *myself*, and that I believe his love, and the proof of his love, *with application to myself;* and therefore, even so I take him and trust upon his word, that he loved ME, and gave himself for ME.' This faith comes not by *feeling* of his love—that may be the fruit of faith; but it comes by the *hearing* of his love. The Spirit makes impressions on the heart by

the word, but the ground of faith is not these impressions on the heart; for the object of faith is not Christ working on the heart, but Christ speaking in the word."

Dear reader, my great aim in the foregoing remarks is to convince you that you cannot reach heaven from Sinai, but only from Calvary; that the law can only kill, and Christ alone gives life.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Dying Words of Jesus.

"It is finished." John 19: 30.

The dying words of our friends are always felt to possess a deep and a solemn interest. We feel that we are listening for the last time to that voice which has often thrilled our hearts and opened fountains of joy in our souls. We feel that those lips are soon to be cold in death, and sealed in the silence of the grave, and that those farewell utterances are too precious to be forgotten. Where is the man who has stood by the bedside of a pious mother, and from her pale and quivering lips heard her parting counsels, who can ever forget them? He may wander through the most rude and boisterous scenes of earthly folly, and plunge recklessly into the vortex of sin; but amid the pauses of his mad career, the voice of that dying mother will be heard ringing through every chamber of his soul, in tones solemn and awful as a voice from eternity.

One reason why we listen to the last words of our friends with so much interest is, that we feel them to be *honest* words. In the awful presence of death, and with eternity breaking in solemn grandeur upon their view, there is no room for words of trifling or flattery. We naturally suppose that the last panting and failing breath will only be employed in the utterance of something which they regard as important, and hence we are unwilling to let one syllable escape us; and years after they have been sleeping in the dust we think of their last expressions of love, of interest in our welfare, of fervent desire for our spiritual good, as among our holiest heart-memories. Even when our own last hour of searching trial comes, and the King of Terrors stands at our bedside, shaking his uplifted dart, the memory of the last words of triumph uttered by departed friends helps to strengthen our faith amid the fearful conflict—

a plain proof that no man liveth to himself, so no man dieth to himself.

If these things be true of the dying words of our earthly friends, how much more so of the dying words of Jesus. If the last words of the Christian are held sacred, how much more those of the Christian's Lord—the God-man.

It is very true that all the words which he ever uttered were weighty, important and precious. He never uttered one vain or idle word, nor one that was not calculated to minister grace to the hearer; his enemies themselves being judges—"Never man spake like this man." But we feel that his dying words must have a peculiar interest. In that hour, the most solemn and important which the universe has ever witnessed—when the world's guilt was laid upon him—and all the powers of hell seemed let loose against him—the few sentences which he uttered must ever be very dear to all who have learned to love and revere his name.

In these few words, "It is finished," there is wrapped up for every believing soul the greatest gift which God could give or man receive—*a perfect salvation.* It is one of the most precious sentences in a book full of heavenly gems. It contains only three words, but it has far more than three ideas, for eternity cannot exhaust the blessings which it unfolds. Every portion of the word of God is profitable; but there are a few brief, pointed sentences that rise in beauty and grandeur above the others, like Niagara among waterfalls, or like some vast mountain that sends its sky-piercing summit above all others. Take, for example, that sentence into which God breathed his own omnipotence—"Let there be light;" or that other, which brings God so near to us that we feel that we would not give it up for all the books that uninspired men have ever written—"God is love;" or that other, which tells us that Jesus, while he is our God, is also our brother, and makes us feel his heart of deep sympathy throbbing against ours—"Jesus wept."

So with the words "It is finished." It is the answer to many an anxious question which had broken from the troubled heart of humanity for four thousand years. It is the top-stone put

upon the wonderful fabric of Almighty grace. It gathers around itself all that is loving in God's dealings with our race in the past, and all that faith and hope sees of glory in the future, and shows us the source of the one and the solid foundation of the other. Dear reader, you may have been acquainted with these words from your earliest youth; you may have heard them and repeated them a thousand times, till they have become as familiar to your mind as the alphabet; but if you have not yet found the pardon of all your sins in them, if you have not been saved by them, you have as yet read and heard them to no purpose but to increase your condemnation.

Let us now gather around the Cross, and ponder upon what was our Lord's meaning when he uttered these words, and may the Holy Spirit apply them with power to our hearts.

First, our Lord did not merely mean that now his life of trial and suffering was at an end. No doubt this was true, and a glorious truth it must have been to one who bore such a life-burden of suffering, that by general consent the designation of "the man of sorrows" was given to him. We can form no conception of the amount of anguish that was compressed into those thirty-three years of his brief life on earth. All the way from the manger to the Cross was marked by suffering such as defies the descriptive power of both poetry and eloquence. He could say with divine propriety, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The greater part of these sorrows were not outward, but inward—not the mere sufferings of the flesh, but the deeper anguish of the soul.

There are persons who can form no idea of such anguish. They are mere bundles of sense — masses of flesh and blood. If they are not pinched by hunger and thirst, or if physical pain does not drive its sharp goads through their nerves, they can form no conception of that interior anguish which deeply sensitive spirits feel. And what is all physical pain, convulsing every limb and shaking every nerve to dissolution, compared to the trembling spirit struggling under its own load of sorrow, which no earthly aid can help it to bear! Now our adorable Saviour had a mind of the tenderest sensibility—of the keenest

feeling. He felt an infinite abhorrence of the sin with which he was constantly coming in contact, and yet the tenderest compassion for the sinners. He could see, as none other who ever dwelt on earth did see, or can see, the deep compassion of that love which sinners are rejecting, the horrors of that perdition upon which sinners are rushing, and the sublime glories of that heaven of bliss upon which they are turning their backs.

And with all this constantly before his omniscient eye, how deep must have been his anguish when he passed through populous cities and towns, and saw scarcely a soul in sympathy with the truth that alone can save! And when we add to this the fact, that the baptism of blood through which he was to pass, the fearful curse due to sin which he was to bear, and the dark tempest of divine displeasure that was to beat upon his holy soul were ever before him, we are able to see, apart from his physical sufferings, a reason why the shadow of some big woe seemed ever to rest upon him, and why we hear so often of his tears, and so seldom of his joys.

When he uttered my text all this was about to end. For the homeless exile, who had not where to lay his head, the Father's house of many mansions was about to open its kindly doors. Instead of the contradiction of sinners, the shouts of unholy mockery, and the roar of blasphemy that was now in his ears, he was soon to hear the song of all heaven in his praise. The crown of thorns was soon to be exchanged for a crown of glory; the hand pierced by the nail to hold the sceptre of universal power, and the position of an outcast criminal to be exchanged for a name at which every knee shall yet bow. All this is true, and yet it is not a thousandth part of the truth contained in the words "It is finished."

Again: Our Lord did not mean by these words that in consequence of his death all men would be saved. After he triumphed over the grave, and just before his ascension to glory, he told his disciples who would be saved and who would not. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The mere fact that Jesus has died for you, my reader, does not necessarily secure your sal-

vation; nay, you may make such a use of that fact that it will a thousand fold increase your condemnation; for to go into the presence of God with not only our sins as a swift witness against us, but with the rejected blood of Jesus condemning us, is the most awful position any soul can occupy. Hence, wherever the apostles went, they preached that unbelief or rejection of Christ was a *damning sin.* They did not preach that because Jesus died for all men, therefore all men would be saved, but cried, "How *can* ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation!" The result was that men became alarmed under their preaching wherever they went. Their hearers were often cut to the heart by the most powerful convictions of guilt, and under a sense of the extreme peril of their condition, cried out, "What shall we do to be saved?"—a plain proof that the apostles did not preach that all men would be saved by Jesus, whether they trusted him or not.

Again: Jesus did not mean by these words that holiness of heart and purity of character were rendered unnecessary by his finished work. A man may profess trust in the death of Jesus, and an entire reliance on the merits of the Saviour, while he is living in sin and in the unchecked indulgence of his depraved nature. He may talk of his faith in the atonement, and boast of the peace which his faith gives him, while love of sin, in all its unbroken power, is reigning in his heart. But such a faith is *dead*, and will no more save his soul than the faith of devils saves them. It is an unholy perversion of the most glorious of all truths. It is holding the truth in unrighteousnesss, and turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. It is sinning because grace abounds, and making the blood of Christ the minister of sin. Upon the guilty heads of such vile perverters of the truth the wrath of God will come to the uttermost. With the impudent and brazen effrontery that makes them assume so much now, they will at last knock at heaven's gate, saying, "Lord, open unto us!" but like an avenging blast to sweep them away shall be the reply, "I never knew you! Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!"

If a man is saved by the finished work of Jesus, he is saved

"IT IS FINISHED!"

*from* his sins, and made a partaker of his Saviour's holiness. The moment he becomes Christ's he gets in some degree the mind that was in Christ — a mind distinguished by uncompromising hatred of all sin. Many have feared that the preaching of justification by faith must have a tendency to encourage men in sin, and that it must be dangerous to the interests of morality to go to all men, whatever their character, and tell them that there is nothing left for them to do in order to be saved but to believe in Jesus with their whole hearts. To go to the drunkard, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the man who has outraged all the decencies of life, and set at open defiance the laws both of God and man—the man who has written all over his moral character that he is a child of wrath and on his way to hell; to go to such, and tell them that just as they are, without waiting to make themselves better, they must now come to Jesus, who alone can cleanse them from all their sins, seems to some persons an utter perversion of all truth upon this subject. They would have us to go to such and preach to them, first, morality, and the necessity of a reformation of life. They would have us exhort them to build up a good character and a reputation for moral worth among their fellow men, and that then we might invite them to come to Christ, to help them out with whatever was deficient for their admission to heaven.

Such are the views of a class of proud Pharisees, who are equally ignorant of the gospel and human nature. Such persons seem to overlook the fact that the holy eye of God looks upon the heart; that in his sight nothing can be recognized as a true act of obedience that does not spring from love to him; that an impure fountain cannot send forth pure streams; and, that, therefore, no reformation of the *outward* man can be permanent which is not founded upon an entire change of the *inner* man. This change nothing but faith in Christ can produce. A noted minister tells us that he preached morality, and nothing else, to his people, till he had scarcely a moral man in his parish; but when his own heart was touched by the love of Christ, and he began to preach the great doctrine of justification by faith, a wave of holy influence rolled over the whole

parish; bad men became good, and good men better; the drunkard dashed from his lips the maddening cup; the dishonest, the impure, the reckless and the profane became patterns of all that is virtuous and of good report, while of the bold blasphemer it was once more said, "Behold, he prayeth!"

> "Talk they of morals? Oh, thou bleeding Lamb!
> The true morality is love to thee."

The way in which faith in the finished work of Calvary produces such a transforming change is by producing love to Jesus, and consequently hatred to sin. It is impossible for any sinner to believe that Jesus endured the untold agonies of the Cross for him, without his heart being melted into love by it. Constituted as we are, the hearty belief of pure, disinterested love must always beget love. "We love him because he first loved us." And if we love Jesus, we will be specially solicitous to please and obey him. The first question that leaps out spontaneously from every heart touched by the holy fire of Christ's love is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" In the awful scenes of Calvary the sinner learns to see the great evil of sin, and to hate it with a perfect hatred; and the love of Christ constraining him, he begins a war of extermination against it in his own heart, in the church, in the world, in high places or in low; whether it be sin flaunting in gay apparel, and painted or varnished by an outward respectability, or sin in its most vulgar and repulsive forms.

We see, then, that a two-fold object is effected by faith in the precious blood of Christ: the sinner's guilt is pardoned, and the sinner's heart is purified. "Faith worketh by love and purifieth the heart." Wherever this doctrine is preached in faithfulness, it changes the whole aspect of society. By the preaching of this truth the apostles turned the world upside down, uprooting the long-established and hoary systems of error around them; and, in spite of the combined opposition of kings and priests, earthly governments and earthly potentates, doing more for the moral elevation of man in a few months than the combined philosophies of the world had done in the past centuries. Though the preaching the Cross has always been to the

proud and worldly foolishness, yet it has ever been "the power of God unto salvation;" and just as sure as it conquered proud hearts in the dwelling of Cæsar, just so certain is it that it will go on to conquer till the sun in the heavens will not look down upon a single individual in whose heart the love of Jesus is not supreme.

It was by preaching the simple doctrine of justification by faith that Luther shook the world and rolled away the thick darkness of ignorance and superstition that had settled down upon the nations, as we have seen the thick mists rolling up the mountain side before the brightness of the rising sun. We are told that when the Moravian missionaries went first among the Greenlanders, they spoke to them chiefly of the being of a God, the creation of the world, the fall of man, and such like topics, to which the people listened with perfect indifference; but when they began to speak to them of the love of Jesus, their hearts melted before it like their own snow heaps before the summer sun.

The Rev. Dr. Fuller, speaking of a missionary that went among the Indians, says: "He was sent among the Indians, and he preached to them with all his earnestness, of God, his power, his grandeur and his glory; but they turned away and laughed at him. Why, they had heard far nobler sermons on these subjects than man could utter. They had sat down by day amid the wild pomp of their mountains and the sublime silence of their forests, and at night had looked up at the pavement of unfading fire above their heads. They had listened to the rushing of the cataract, 'deep calling unto deep,' and to the music of the tempest and the cry of the hurricane. Before their eyes the lightning's fiery flood had rifted the sturdy oak, and hoarse and strong had thundered on beneath them the might of the earthquake. They had heard *these* preach, and they preached of God in tones which mocked the puny articulations of human eloquence. And now, that the white man should come to tell them that there is a God, and that this God is great, and powerful, and glorious—they spurned at him in hardness and derision. Baffled in his first effort, the missionary changed his

address, and proclaimed a crucified Jesus. Nor did he preach in vain now. The gaze of his audience was at once fastened. They were astonished at the doctrine, and their hearts were at once touched. As the speaker went on with 'the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation,' as he led them from scene to scene of the Saviour's humiliation and sorrow—from the manger to the garden, and from the garden to the judgment hall—smothered sobs and murmurs began to be heard, until at last, when he brought them to the Cross, and showed them, nailed there, the abused and suffering Son of God, and said, 'All this for you—these tears, these groans, this blood for you!'—the poor savages could refrain no longer—they had stood all else, but they could not stand this; they exclaimed, 'Is this true? is this true?' and lifted up their voices and wept aloud."

We come now to show more particularly what was our Lord's meaning when he uttered these memorable words; and we will better understand what was finished if we ask what was needed to be done; for whatever needed to be done to effect the work of man's salvation, so far as removing all the obstacles on God's part out of the way, that we may rest assured the blessed Saviour has done. The words "It is finished" teach us that the claims of God's justice had been fully met by his death. God had given man a perfect, just and holy law—a law highly reasonable in itself, and, if kept, calculated to promote man's highest good. This law may be expressed in a few words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." It demands, then, perfect obedience—the love of the whole heart, and the constant obedience of the whole life. That obedience we have not rendered, for where is the man who dare put his hand upon his heart. and, looking up to the heavens, say, "I have loved God with my whole heart, and I have never sinned against him in thought, word or action?" Such a man is not to be found in the whole round of God's earth. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The result of our being sinners, then, is that we come under the threatened penalty of the law; for every law must have a penalty attached to it, else it ceases to be a law, and only becomes a piece of friendly advice, which

we may take or reject as we please. The penalty attached to God's law is *death*—the death of the soul—eternal death. To incur this penalty it is not necessary that man should be an outwardly notorious offender; it is not necessary that he break the whole or the greater portion of the ten commandments. If he has broken but one of them—if he has not loved the Lord his God with all his heart during the whole of his life—he comes under the curse of the law, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to keep them."

If any one should object, and ask why God should give a perfect law to such imperfect creatures, I would reply, that God did make man perfect, aud he wilfully destroyed himself. Besides, if God gave man any law at all, it must have been a perfect law. An imperfect law would have been a sinful law—a law which would permit man a license to sin up to a given point, which would be making God the author of sin, which in the infinitely Holy One is impossible. Here, then, we see the whole race of Adam standing condemned before their Maker—under the fearful curse of the law—condemned *already*.

But Jesus becomes our substitute, and bears the curse for us. He took up that law which we have trampled upon, and magnified it and made it honorable, by rendering it a perfect obedience, and by showing that it was his meat and his drink to obey it, saying "I delight to do thy will, O my God!" He gave himself in our room and stead, the just for the unjust. He satisfied the very highest demands of justice. The divinity of his nature and the infinite purity of his character gave such worth to his atonement, such value to his blood, that the claims of God's justice are more fully met than if a whole world of sinners had been sent to perdition; yea, so fully satisfied is justice that it now unites with love in urging the sinner to return to his God. It was in full view of a result so glorious that our Lord said, "It is finished."

We see, then, that the atonement of the Lord Jesus was not the cause of God's love, but the result of it. God does not love us because Jesus died, but Jesus died because God loved us.

God loved the sinner as much before Jesus died as he did after it; but there was no channel in which that love could flow into the sinner's heart in consistence with his truth and justice. Mighty barriers stood in the way, which no hands but the bleeding hands of Jesus could tear away. The truth of God stood in the way, in the stern words, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." The justice of God stood in the way, holding in its hand a glittering sword, aimed at the sinner's heart. But when Jesus bared his holy bosom and received its burning point into his own heart for the sinner, these barriers were all removed; and now the love of God can flow on without restriction, till it fills with pardon and peace the heart of the vilest sinner who trusts in his Son. The more of such sinners are saved, the more is God glorified; for they are saved in a way that shows his boundless love, while at the same time it exalts his justice and his truth, his holiness and his wisdom.

We understand, then, that when the Saviour uttered these words he meant us to believe that the whole work of meriting our salvation was done by him, and that no prayers, no tears, no good resolutions, no holy emotions, no good works are required on our part *to make us acceptable to God.* It is *a finished work*, which our Lord presented to the Father, and nothing can be added to that which is finished and perfected. As a proof that the work was perfect, the Father declared himself well pleased with it by raising his Son up from the dead, and putting all power in heaven and earth into the hands that bore the print of the nails, and sending forth a proclamation to the whole world that there is "no other name given under heaven or among men by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus."

When the sinner comes out of all self-dependence and trusts in Jesus, he from that moment becomes identified with Christ, so that he is said to be *in* Christ and Christ *in* him. As the branch is connected with the vine, and draws all its life and fruitfulness from it, so the believer is so united to Christ that "he won't be in glory and leave him behind." He can no more be condemned in the last day than Christ can be condemned, for he appears in his righteousness and depending alone on his

merits; and this only is the reason why believers are hailed at judgment with the kind words, "Well done, good and faithful servants," and why they are said in heaven to be "without fault before God."

I have heard of an inquirer, anxious about her soul, asking a minister if the work of her salvation had been finished by Jesus; when the reply was that Jesus finished his part of the work, but that *her part* was still to do. Why, if Satan was to become incarnate, and get ordained to the ministry, he could not preach more soul-ruining doctrine than this! What part of the Saviour's work could be said to be *his* work? Was not the whole that he did and suffered *for us?* And what, I ask, can we do that can add to that work, or that can be called our part of it? If it should be said that we are commanded to believe in it, I answer that that is very true, but what merit is there in faith? Is the poor, perishing beggar entitled to take merit to himself for simply opening his hand to receive your bounty? Does his doing so add anything to the free grace of your gift? So far from faith adding anything to Christ's finished work, it is its province to believe in a work already finished, and from that fact alone it is to draw all its certainty of pardon and acceptance.

It is evident that there are great multitudes who are kept from a full acceptance of Christ by a confusion of ideas on this subject. Some are eagerly scrutinizing their minds to see if they have done their part yet—to see if they have the evidences that they are Christians; and when they have discovered some emotions and fruits that look something like what they have read or heard of what Christians possess, then they are hopeful —almost joyful; but again, when they cannot discover these emotions, they are saddened and depressed. Now what is this but making a Saviour of their own feelings? Others, again, have not present faith in Christ's perfected work, but they are resting upon some sudden emotion of joy which they felt some time in prayer, after a season of great excitement and terror, and which they call conversion, although there is *no Christ in it.*

Permit me to relate a case in point. A minister preached a

solemn discourse one Sabbath evening, to a large congregation. Many were moved to tears, and at the close of the service a young man presented himself for conversation, under deep conviction of sin. The "terrors of the Lord had taken hold of him," and his sin was made to appear "exceeding sinful." With a look of deep anguish he exclaimed, "I am a lost sinner! What shall I do?" After directing him to the Saviour, the minister requested one of his deacons who was present to engage in prayer. That prayer seemed truly inspired by the Spirit, and the man of God in his fervent importunity seemed like a second Jacob. After a moment of silence the minister asked the young man how he felt. He instantly exclaimed, "I am happy!" and his beaming countenance and sparkling eye bore testimony to the truth of the statement. "What makes you happy?" "That good man's prayers," was the reply. "His prayers!" the minister exclaimed; if it be *them* you are relying upon, they will ruin you." His soul was in such deep anguish that he was ready to take comfort from any quarter, and during the progress of that prayer the thought came into his mind that God must hear such a good man, and must forgive him for the sake of such prayers; and as a false hope will for a time give peace and joy, as well as the true hope, he instantly cried out, "I am happy." And yet he was resting on a false hope, and might as well have been depending on the prayers of the Virgin Mary.

In short, let us never forget that until we have rested our souls entirely upon the finished work of Jesus, we have not taken the very *first step* in religion. No matter how serious we may be—no matter how attentive to many religious duties, nor how moral and upright in our outward deportment, till we have received Christ as a perfect Saviour we are under the curse of the law, and there rests upon our souls the tremendous guilt of rejecting the world's Saviour.

Let me illustrate this in the following way: Here are a number of persons who have rebelled against the government, and have been guilty of treason. The penalty which they have incurred is death. The Governor, however, at a great sacrifice,

sends them the offer of pardon, on terms easy and simple, and with which they are all able to comply. But they all with one consent reject his way of bestowing pardon, and set about working out plans of their own. One is willing to go every day to the Governor's house, and to present petitions two or three times a day. Another is striving to work up his feelings, so that he may feel deeply on account of his crime, while he fasts and scourges himself, and thinks that on account of these tears and self-mortifications he ought to be pardoned. Another reads over the statute book, and makes himself thoroughly acquainted with the laws of the land, and thinks that on this account he should be saved. Thus they go on, each taking his own way, but all agreeing in one thing, that they will not submit to the Governor's simple and reasonable terms—the only terms on which he could consistently save them. When at last they are led forth to execution, do they not perish with their blood upon their own heads? So it is with sinners in regard to their rejection of the plan of salvation—they professing to be willing to do anything to be saved but the very thing that God commands—"Believe in the Lord Jesus." They are often willing to go to God's house to utter many prayers, to read the Bible, to be baptized, to partake of the Lord's Supper, and to break off many outward sins; but in all this there is no religion as long as they will not do the very first thing their God requires of them—submit to be saved by the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

A vessel was once sent out to cruise in the Mediterranean, in search of a sunken rock said to exist there. The captain, after searching for a long time, abandoned the enterprise, declaring the supposed danger a dream. One of his officers afterwards, in the same latitude and longitude, discovered a reef of rocks, which he reported to the admiralty. His discovery was inserted in the charts, and he was abundantly rewarded. When this intelligence reached the old captain, he was deeply offended, and declared the whole thing an imposition, and promised that if he ever sailed again in those waters, he would pass his vessel right over the spot. Some two years after, he was conveying

the British Ambassador to Naples, when one dark, stormy night, the two were looking over the chart, when the Ambassador pointed out the sunken rocks. "What!" said the captain, "is this pretended discovery to meet me in the teeth again? I said I would sail over it the first chance I had, and I will." He went down to the cabin, and in a strain of mockery related the whole story, and pulling out his watch, he said: "In five minutes we will be over the spot!" There was a pause, when he laughingly exclaimed, "Ah! the time is past! we have gone over the wonderful reef!" But soon a dull, grating sound was heard; then a terrible crash, and the noble vessel had foundered. By great exertion nearly all were saved. But the captain refused to leave the wreck; he would not survive the results of his mad conduct, and soon the wild waves rolled over his head.

He perished because of his unbelief. So shall the sinner who rejects Christ. A chart, heaven-drawn and authenticated, has been put into his hand. His peril is pointed out by the finger of God himself. There is but one way of escape from the impending ruin: it is trust in Jesus, for "he that believeth not shall be damned." Sinner, cast your whole soul with a steadfast trust upon the dying words of Jesus.

Dear reader, these truths are pressed upon your attention with deep solicitude, knowing that if you do not receive them you will harden your heart against them. I have somewhere read of a Brahmin in India, a part of whose religious creed it was not to eat the flesh of animals. A missionary tried to reason with him on his superstitious notions, and sought to convince him that he was eating animals when he least suspected it. For this purpose he got him to look through a microscope at some fruit he had been eating, when he started back in horror to see thousands of living animals upon his favorite food. Filled with indignation, the Brahmin seized the instrument that had brought the unwelcome truth to his mind, and trampled it to fragments under his feet. Poor benighted soul! He could destroy the microscope, but he could not destroy the truth which it proclaimed; *that* remained the same amid all the outbursts of his childish and impotent rage.

In like manner sinners often rage against the truth that convicts them, and loudly denounce as errors those doctrines whose power over their trembling consciences is a strong evidence of their divine origin. You will hear one repudiating the Bible as the unintelligible jargon of a fanatical mysticism, and denouncing with the fiercest vituperation a book, the evidence of whose heavenly origin he has never examined and will not examine, and of the contents of which he is profoundly ignorant. You will hear another become wildly excited in pouring out his scorn upon the doctrine of future punishment; talking loudly of the eternal salvation of all men, whatever their character, while it is not difficult to see that he has hard work to convince himself of the truth of his utterance, and that, like the schoolboy passing the graveyard, he is only "whistling to keep his courage up!" A third class may be seen professing to believe with a sturdy faith in all the ghostly stories of a so-called *spiritualism*, and yet refusing to believe in that sure word of prophecy which has commanded the confidence of the great and the good in all ages of the world. And still another unhappy class may be found, who, professing to believe the truths of the Bible, as held by evangelical Christians, yet struggle against conviction, fight against the efforts of their best friends to do their souls good, and make their miserable lives one scene of enmity and contention, and unholy passion against Christ's holy love.

When sinners thus get themselves wrapped up in the darkness of unbelief, they will not be persuaded of their great danger, because they do not see it. Others see their peril, and are much alarmed on their account—"Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men;" but, enveloped in the mantle of darkness, they often refuse to believe the warnings of their best friends, and regard them as the groundless fancies of excited fanaticism.

A captain of a vessel crossing the Atlantic was on deck one dark, stormy night, when a sudden flash of lightning showed him a large vessel bearing right down upon them. He rushed to the helm and altered his course, when in an instant the strange vessel swept past them, carrying away part of their rigging! That light from heaven showed them their danger and

saved their lives. The light did not *make* the danger—it only showed them what already existed. So it is with you, sinner. If God were to show you your danger at this moment, as it really is, you would drop upon your knees and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The indifference and carelessness which you now feel is founded on ignorance of your true peril, and is unworthy of a rational and responsible creature. It is a *brutish indifference*—like that of the ox on the way to the slaughter.

When the soul is sunk in the darkness of unbelief it can see no beauty in Christ, that it should desire him. In a dark night you might pass through the most lovely garden or the most attractive scenery, and have no emotions of delight awakened in your bosom. As it is the light that comes from the sun that enables us to see the sun, so it is the light that comes from the Sun of Righteousness that enables us to see him in his resplendent beauty. But sinners shun that light, hate it, and prefer darkness; and, as a result, they see nothing lovely in Christ. He is as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness in him. Thus they go on every day, despising the light and trampling upon heaven-sent privileges, forgetting that our guilt and our responsibility are in proportion to our light.

And then we will not merely be judged according to the light we have, but according to the light we *might have had.* You may be ignorant of the gospel; but if you would not go to the house of God, where you might have learned it, or if you refuse to read the Bible, which would have taught you the way of life, you will be judged by the light you thus despised. Oh! then, welcome the light of God!—it is your best friend amid a world of darkness; it will guide you amid perils that mortal eye cannot see; it will burn bright in your soul as you walk through the dark valley, and it will mingle its rays with the glories of that heavenly city where they need not the light of the sun.

All the religion that is in the world may be classified under two heads, namely, the religion of man and the religion of Christ. Man's religion is a dependence on self-righteousness, in some of its forms; Christ's religion is entire dependence on

the finished work of Christ for *present pardon* and eternal life. Now, man's religion knows nothing about *present pardon.* Its language is, "Do as well as you can, pray as well as you can, feel as deeply penitent as you can, be as attentive to your religious duties as you can, and *some time* before you die God will forgive you."

It may vary in form, but everywhere it is essentially the same. In the Pharisee it proudly said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." Among the heathen it showed itself in human sacrifices and painful lacerations of their own bodies. Among others it takes the form of penances, fasting, and dependence on the priest; while among many who would despise this as superstitious it takes the form of striving to make themselves more holy before they come to Christ, of laboring to get better feelings and deeper convictions before they come to him, or the grosser form of self-righteousness—depending upon some outward performance of religious duties, and hoping that God will on that account forgive them before they die.

Now, Christ's religion just *begins* where man's ends; it begins with pardon. The first religious act it calls upon man to perform is to trust in Jesus, and the moment he thus trusts, he is forgiven. Reader, he is near you as you trace these lines. Oh! now bow down before him, and by simple faith cast yourself upon his finished work, and you will rise from your knees a pardoned soul! He will say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace and sin no more."

## CHAPTER VI.

### LESSONS FROM THE GREAT TEACHER.

John 3: 1—18.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and hence it is all profitable. Man's spiritual life is to be sustained by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. But there are some portions of that book which unfold to us more of God's character than others—which reveal to us his *very heart*, and thus become unspeakably precious to the heart of the believer. For example! what a legacy to the world is this third chapter of John's gospel! "No man hath seen God at any time;" but here Jesus reveals him to us, and we see the pulsations of the great heart of love, as it beats with compassion toward a lost world. This chapter contains all that is sublimely mysterious and inimitably simple in the conversion of a sinner. It is a light-house that has cast its cheering light over many a tempest-tossed mind, and guided it through many a storm of passion, and prejudice, and unbelief, into the quiet, secure haven of trust in Jesus. It answers the question which the great, restless, troubled heart of humanity is ever feeling, if not ever asking, "What shall I do to be saved?"

And, blessed be God! it does not answer this question in metaphysical and theoretical terms, difficult to be understood. It does not answer it by a chain of severely logical arguments, which only well-disciplined minds could grasp, but in an interesting narrative, and in the plain, simple words which marked the utterances of Him who "spake as never man spake," and whom "the common people heard gladly."

### A BLIND LEADER.

The great city of Jerusalem has sunk into repose, and silence reigns, almost unbroken, through streets that sent up but lately

the incessant roar so characteristic of great cities. The hum of industry, the merry shout of childhood and the wild cry of revelry have died away, and all is wrapped in the gloom of night. But there is one distinguished citizen who cannot sleep, and whose anxious mind is grappling with thoughts too big for utterance. He has been listening to the Great Teacher, and his words have burned like fire into his soul. For the first time, he is startled by the thought that all is not right with his soul, and that his religion of mere ceremonialism is vain before God. At length his distress becomes so great that he resolves to see Jesus; and passing into the dark street, with stealthy step, he goes to the place of his temporary abode.

This was Nicodemus, a member of the Hebrew Sanhedrim, and a ruler of the Jews. We can imagine something of the deep interest of the scene as he reaches the room where the Saviour is lodged, and stands face to face with the Friend of Sinners. That once proud and haughty scribe has now come to the despised Jesus for instruction about the great interests of eternity. The teacher of others comes to be taught himself, with a fearful conviction pressing upon his soul that he has only been "a blind leader of the blind." Alas! is it not to be feared that there are many professed teachers of Christianity in the same awful state? They are called preachers of the gospel, but the gospel is never preached by them because they do not know it. Kind, intelligent, well instructed in many things, full of professional zeal, sincere, and anxious to do good, they are, nevertheless, leading souls to hell! They daub with untempered mortar, and say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." I believe it is Baxter who gives utterance to the awful sentiment, that there will be many in hell who, when upon earth, had often made themselves hoarse warning others not to go to that place.

Krummacher gives the following anecdote, which ought to startle every minister into solemn self-examination.

"Several years ago there lived not far from us a very gifted preacher, who had for a considerable time announced with great energy and success the word from the Cross, and who, as we may suppose, had his share of enemies. One of his oppo-

nents, a man of information, from a distaste of the truth had long ceased to frequent the church. One Sabbath morning he thought he would once more hear the stern man preach. He went to church. The preacher treated of the narrow way, which he made neither smaller nor wider than it is made in the word of God. During the sermon the visitor thinks within himself—'How is this! If what the man is saying be the truth—O, my God! what will be the consequence?' This thought cleaved to him. Wherever he went he heard the whisper in his heart—'Is it truth or falsehood?' At last he thought of going to the preacher, to ask him, upon his conscience, if he was convinced of the truth of what he had asserted. 'Sir,' he accosts the preacher, 'I was one of your hearers a short time since, when you preached of the only way of salvation. You have disturbed my inward peace, and I cannot refrain from asking you solemnly before God, and upon your conscience, whether you can prove your assertions.' The minister replies with decisive assurance, that he had spoken God's word, and consequently infallible truth. 'O, my God!' exclaimed his visitor, 'is it thus? Dear sir, what will become of us?' 'Of *us!*' thinks the minister, rather startled: and repulsing the strange *us* from his heart, he commences expounding to the querist the doctrine of redemption, and exhorts him to repentance and faith. But the latter, as if he had not heard a single syllable the preacher was saying, interrupted him, and with increasing warmth repeats the anxious exclamation—'If it is the truth, dear sir, I pray you what shall we do?' Terrified, the preacher staggers back. '*We*,' he thinks—'what means this *we?*' and striving to conceal the uneasiness and confusion of his heart, he begins anew to explain and exhort. Tears started to the eyes of the visitor, and clasping his hands like one in despair, he exclaims with a voice that might have moved the very stones—'Dear sir, if it is the truth, then we are lost!' The preacher stands pale and trembling, and his speech fails him. He casts his eyes to the ground, and then embracing his visitor, amid sobs, he says, 'My friend, down into the dust, and let us pray and wrestle!' They bend their knees, they pray, they embrace

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

each other, and the stranger departs. The preacher locks himself up in his chamber, and on the Sabbath following he is indisposed, and unable to appear in the pulpit. The next Sabbath is the same. On the third he appears before the congregation, grief-worn and pale, yet with looks of joy, and commences his sermon with the affecting declaration that it was only *now* that he also had made his way through the narrow gate!"

Why did Nicodemus come by night to Jesus? No doubt he had that strange mingling of fear and shame which is often seen in awakened sinners. Why that unwillingness on the part of the convicted sinner to have it known that he is anxious about his soul? Why that desire to conceal from father, mother, and dearest earthly friends, that an arrow from God's quiver has been lodged in his heart? Persons have told me that they have come again and again to my gate, and even have had their hand upon my door, to speak to me about their souls, and yet have shrunk away in the dark, ashamed to come in. Ah! this is our depravity. A man is not ashamed to speak about the disease of his body, but he is about that of his soul. A man is not ashamed to be seen weeping over his dead child, but he is over his dead soul! He is not ashamed to be found eating, but he is ashamed to be found praying. Oh! how disgraceful! Shame is a passion that was designed to be as a kind of sentinel to the soul, to warn it of the approach of sin; but what a fearful perversion of this power, when men glory in what is wrong and are ashamed of the right!—a plain proof that the whole man has become depraved by sin, and that until his conversion it controls his whole being, as one observes, just as the helm of the ship controls every plank, and beam, and bolt, and sail about her.

One wise thing Nicodemus did; he went directly to Jesus himself. He did not go, in his deep spiritual anguish, to the traditions of the Jews, to the ceremonies of the law, to the books of the learned, nor to the philosophy of the deep thinkers of the age. These could have done him no good. What he needed was not a creed in his head, but a living Christ in

his heart. It was not a religion that he wanted, but *the truth*—not a great deal of knowledge about God, but *God himself*. The Jews professed a great respect for the Sacred Writings, and would have resented with the deepest indignation any imputation cast upon them; and yet at the very time they were rejecting, with proud disdain, the very Christ of whom these Scriptures were full, and to whom the whole order of their temple service pointed;—a plain proof that a man may have a great deal of theology and no Christ.

Happy is the soul that has learned to say concerning Christ, "Lord, to whom can we go but unto thee?" And yet it is about the last thing that we find out, that we have no other title to Christ but our utter ruin, and that every step we take to improve ourselves is a step in the wrong direction. What we need is not self-reformation, not the mending and patching up of an old life, but a new life altogether; and that life is only to be found in Christ.

### NICODEMUS ASTONISHED.

The very first statement of truth that fell from the lips of the Saviour startled and astonished Nicodemus. He came to Jesus impressed with the divinity of his mission, and awed by the glory and grandeur of his miracles; and yet the first statement this "teacher come from God" makes confounds and bewilders him, and causes him to exclaim, "How can these things be?" This is the first effect of gospel truth upon the natural man, the whole world over. No matter how distinguished he may be for the vigor of his intellect or the plenitude and variety of his knowledge, the things of the Spirit are foolishness to the natural man.

When a celebrated geologist was engaged in collecting specimens, the people of the country watched him as he went from rock to rock, from cave to cave, and from hill to valley, carrying his heavy bag of stones upon his back, and they set him down as an escaped lunatic. But that estimate of him arose not from *his madness*, but from *their ignorance*. He had gone down to depths and up to heights of knowledge of which they

could form no conception. When Paul was pouring out the fullness of Christian truth, and the richness of his own personal experience of that truth, a shrewd, intelligent man of the world said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself." And so only that man who has been taught of the Spirit will understand the first lesson in the school of Christ.

Man is so constituted that he must and will worship something. He is as much a worshiping being as he is a breathing or an eating being. Hence he is not opposed to religion, but it must be a religion suited to his own proud and corrupt nature. Of man's religion man himself is the centre. It is what he has done, is doing, or expects to do, that froms the chief ground of his hope. Of God's religion Christ is the centre, and it is what he has done and is doing that forms the ground of the only hope which God will recognize as genuine. There is only one *true religion* in the world, and only *one way* of being saved. That way Jesus began to unfold to Nicodemus, and it startled him. It smote right across all his preconceived notions.

According to man's religion there are many ways of being saved. One says, "If I am only sincere, God will accept me." Another says, "If I am only diligent in my religious duties, and do the best I can, God will expect no more." While another says, "It matters not what a man believes, if his conduct only be right," by which he means a regard to morality and the outward decencies of life. But there is one thing about which they all agree, and that is, that man is not so utterly ruined and lost as to require a new nature altogether. Man's theory is, that there is good in his nature—it may be lying in a state of dormancy, and only require to be cultivated and developed. Hence he thinks that when he gets ready he has only to set about a process of Bible-reading, praying, fasting, cherishing solemn feelings, and living a good life, and he will be ready for heaven. As all this process, however, is quite distasteful to his heart, he puts it off as long as he thinks he safely can; and indeed he would not set about it at all, were he not goaded on by the fear of being lost. He is like the sick man, who swallows his nauseous medicine only because he is afraid of death.

Now, against this whole theory Jesus set his face like flint. He taught that it was not the mending and cultivating of the old heart, but an entirely new nature that was required. It was this that alarmed this Jewish teacher, and did such violence to all his former notions of religion. Without holiness no man can enter heaven, and by nature there is not one spark of holiness in man. His heart is enmity against God, and there is therefore nothing within him that is good to be cultivated. You may cultivate a weed ever so much, but you can never cultivate it into the lovely garden flower. You may polish brass ever so long, but you can never polish it into gold. You may chisel a rough block of marble into the perfect likeness of the human body, but you can not put *life* into it.

In like manner you may put the human being through all the process of refinement and elevation known to this enlightened age, but the result will not be holiness of heart. You may educate him to the highest point of intellectual polish. You may pass him through the highest circles of what is called good society, and make him a perfect model of the etiquette and refinement of which such society is proud. The church may take hold of him, and instruct him, and confirm him, and baptize him, and give him a place at her communion, and even place him in a high position among her office-bearers—she may put the phraseology of religion in his lips and the soundest orthodoxy in his head, but she cannot give him a new heart; and let this model man, as the world might call him, go up to the gates of heaven, and you see him recoil with horror, as the voice from the excellent glory thunders in his ears, "Ye must be born again!"

It is hard for a sinner to take in the extent of his utter ruin. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." He is willing to acknowledge that sin is a very evil thing, and that his sins have done him great injury; but still he insists that by diligence on his part that injury can be repaired. Oh, how it alarms him when he receives the divine statement that he is "dead in trespasses and sins!" As when a man falls down suddenly in a fit, and a physician is called in, who, after a brief examination, exclaims, "He is dead!" and the terror-stricken friends cry, "Oh,

doctor, do not say so!" But it is true, and the assertion of the whole world that he is not dead would not prove him alive. The sinner is like a man who has been long sick, and when he looks in the mirror he does not know himself. God holds up the faithful mirror of his word before the eyes of the sinner, and he looks so bad that he starts back unable to recognize himself. The book of God describes man as LOST by sin. "Adam, where art thou?" He was *lost!* Jesus came to seek and save the *lost*—the lost piece of silver—the lost sheep—the lost prodigal—a *lost* world! Left to ourselves the loss would be eternal.

The moment a sinner becomes convinced that his case is really so desperate, and that he must have a new nature or a new life, his first impulse is to set about working to effect it by outward changes. This is natural. Let a man fall into the water, and although he knows that he cannot swim nor save himself, he will instinctively begin to struggle desperately. A minister lately found a man under deep conviction of sin, and in a dying condition. When asked what was his trust for the future, he said he was praying to God to forgive his sins. His visitor told him that he was afraid he was falling into the mistake of thousands —that of putting prayer in the place of Christ, and trusting in his prayers rather than in the blood of Jesus. He was told that Jesus had finished the whole work of our salvation for us, and that it is by faith in what He has done, and not by our prayers and good works, that we are saved. He was told that God proclaimed to him a free pardon—not for his prayers, but for the sake of the shed blood of Christ, and that prayers uttered with the greatest earnestness for a lifetime could not save him. The old man raised his head from his pillow, and exclaimed, "Oh, I see it now! I was in error. *I was on the wrong track!*"

Reader, if you have been thinking that by anything you can do, you make yourself more acceptable to God—if you have been waiting to get a new heart first, and then to come to Jesus, let me affectionately warn you that you are on the wrong track. Your thoughts and God's, your ways and God's ways, come in direct collision. God must *know best* what will save a soul and satisfy the claims of his law, and he has declared that "he that

believeth in the Son of God hath life." He assures us that with the death of his Son in our stead he is entirely satisfied; and surely there is no use in our attempting to be satisfied with any thing that will not satisfy the God with whom we have to do. Surely we should be pleased with what pleases the eternal justice of Jehovah.

Oh, sinner! let me impress upon you the great truth that you cannot get a new heart—a new life, but by faith in Jesus! "I am come that ye might have *life*, and that ye might have it abundantly." The moment that the soul believes in Jesus, it springs into a new life—the life of God—a life as eternal as God himself. Though living cold and dead in the valley of sin, for many long, melancholy years of rebellion, the moment the sinner hears Christ's voice he springs up, with a new life gushing through his heart, and throbbing through every power of his nature.

Many preach the necessity of the new birth, but do not preach along with it the doctrine of the Cross, by which alone the great change can be produced. Thus the hearer is either repelled into indifference by the dark mysteriousness of what he can never hope to understand, or he is driven in upon an examination of his own mental state, to watch for some symptoms of the great change. Thus the attention of the man is turned upon himself, rather than upon Christ. Our Lord did not content himself with preaching the new birth to this inquirer, but proceeded to fix his mind upon the great truth that could alone produce the change, and all teachers that take him for their model do the same. This is true of all who have been eminently useful in the conversion of souls.

When Dr. Judson was home on a visit, he for a few moments addressed a large meeting, his theme being the preciousness of Christ, and then sat down, deeply affected. On his way home a friend said to him, "The people are very much disappointed; they wonder you did not talk of *something else*." "What did they want?" said the missionary. "I presented, to the best of my ability, the most interesting subject in the world." "But," said his friend, "they wanted something different—a story." "Well," said Judson, "I am sure I gave them a story—the most

interesting one that can be conceived of." "But," said his friend, "they have heard it before. They wanted something new from a man who had just come from the antipodes." Now, my brethren in the ministry, mark the reply of this great man: "Then I am glad they have it to say that a man coming from the antipodes had nothing better to tell them than the wondrous story of the dying love of Jesus. My business is to preach the gospel of Christ; and when I speak at all, I dare not trifle with my commission. When I looked upon those people to-day, and remembered where I should meet them, how could I stand up and furnish food to vain curiosity—tickle their fancy with amusing stories, however decently strung together *on a thread of religion?* This is not what Christ meant by preaching the gospel. And then, how could I hereafter meet the fearful charge: 'I gave you one opportunity to tell them of ME; you spent it in describing your own adventures!'"

### VARIETY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to make the sinner feel his utterly lost and undone condition. To knock from under him his false props; to make him feel that sin is not his *misfortune*, but his *guilt*; and to convince him that he is adding a thousand fold to his past sins by his present rejection of Christ—this is the Spirit's gracious work. Dr. Bonar mentions the case of a man who by the most persevering efforts had tried to make himself better. He doubled the amount of his devotions; he set up family worship; he engaged in the performance of many good works, saying, "Surely God will give me peace now!" But peace came not. At last he thought of having a prayer-meeting in his house, as a remedy that could not fail. He wrote out a prayer and committed it to memory on the day of meeting; and after he had finished committing it, he threw it down on the table, saying, "Surely *that* will do; God will give me peace now!" Just at that moment the words were flashed through his mind—no doubt sent by the Holy Spirit—"No, *that* will *not* do; but Christ will do." Instantly his whole soul was flooded with peace and joy, and for the remainder of his life his watchword was, "Christ will do."

In answer to the astonished looks and words of Nicodemus, our Lord said, "Marvel not that I say unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Now these words have generally been quoted as if they were intended to teach us how mysterious a thing conversion is; whereas, they teach, when properly understood, the very opposite. They teach how *simple* the operations of the Spirit are in the salvation of the soul. The Saviour knew that there is a strong disposition in awakened souls to make the whole matter of conversion mysterious and complicated; and surely he did not mean to encourage this, but rather to counteract it. A very eminent minister of the gospel once said, "One of our great troubles, as ministers, is to keep people from wishing to be *awfully* converted."

The sinner has a certain process in his mind, which he expects must be gone through, if he is ever to be soundly converted. Deep and pungent convictions of sin, that for days and weeks are to shake him over the brink of despair; floods of penitential tears, and wild and passionate cries for mercy; all to be succeeded by a sudden light, if not by an audible voice, telling him that his sins are now forgiven, and filling his soul with a joy that can only find expression in shouts of gladness. This is his programme, and he waits for it being fully carried out. Now, that many thousands have been converted who have had all these convictions and joys, is no doubt true; but when a certain standard of feeling is set up, and none are supposed to be converted who have not met that, a very dangerous error is introduced, over which many souls stumble into hell. This error our Lord meets by the figure of the wind, teaching us the *variety* of the Spirit's operations.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth." Sometimes it blows very gently, making sweet music as it sighs through summer bowers, carrying on its wings the fragrance of the garden, and passing through the open windows of the sick room, gently fans the sufferer's fevered brow; at other times it howls with the

fierce voice of the hurricane, lashes the ocean into mountain billows, and sweeps desolation over a whole continent. At one time it blows pleasantly, wafting away the infectious vapors that linger around cities and camps; while at other times it breaks forth in alarming fury, awakening the fears of a nation, and engulphing in the great deep a whole navy, on which the hopes of that nation were suspended.

In like manner the teachings of the Spirit are marked by a great variety. Sometimes by the still, small voice of love he allures the soul away from the world by the tenderest persuasions, and the heart of a Lydia gently opens to receive the Lord Jesus; while at other times he makes the terrible thunders of Sinai to roll over the sinner's head, the lightnings of Jehovah's vengeance to flash around his soul; and while the terrors of the Lord shake his whole being as with earthquake power, a Bunyan or a Newton is subdued to the Lord. Sometimes, by startling and alarming providences, the Spirit awakens the soul, "even as the eagle stirreth up her nest;" while at other times the, heart is touched by some rich blessing, or melted by some gracious deliverance; and thus "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance," and "as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings," the soul is folded under the protection of Christ.

The Saviour would teach us that there is often great power where there is little noise and excitement. The silent light that quietly steals over the face of nature, bathing everything in its own glory, is a far mightier agent than the bellowing thunder or the mighty earthquake; and so, under the mild and gentle teachings of the Spirit, the kingdom of God, "that cometh not by observation," is set up in the hearts of many. As the soldier lies wounded on the battle-field, his life ebbing away, gazing up at the silent stars through the long night, when it seems as if the wheels of nature had forgot to move, and as if morning would never come, the Spirit leads him to think of truths learned at the Sabbath School, years ago, or of a mother's prayers or a father's counsels; and there, amid war's deadly alarms, he casts himself upon Christ's finished work.

As the young mother takes her last look of her first-born

lying in its little coffin, and imprints her last kiss on its cold brow, the Spirit gently brings her to feel the vanity of the world, and leads her to that Saviour who alone can fit her for meeting her loved one in heaven. As the careless sailor treads the deck of his vessel in the lonely midnight watch, gentle as the breeze that sighs through the shrouds above his head, or causes the soft ripple of the waters beneath his feet, comes the Spirit with holy thoughts of home and its pious scenes. His sins become hateful to him, his neglected Bible is sought out and read, and lips that so lately burned with blasphemies begin to pray. That prodigal youth who fled from the kind home that so long had sheltered him, and from the warm hearts that so long had loved him, finds himself in a strange city, desolate and alone. In the teeming crowds that rush past him every face is strange, and none cares whether he sinks or swims. Sick in body and in mind, he goes to his lonely room, and the Holy Spirit gathers up the memories of the past, and gently as oil sliding over polished marble, sends them flowing through his soul. That sainted mother, whose gray hairs he brought in sorrow to the grave, being dead yet speaks to him. That venerable pastor, though long in his grave, never spoke to him so eloquently as now. The seed sown years ago, by hands long stiff in death, is now coming up, and the bread cast upon the waters is being found. Thus many can say with David, "Thy gentleness has made me great." The gentle gales of heaven have wafted them into a safe port, and brought them into a position, before the greatness of which all earthly honors sink into insignificance.

Sinner, is not this solemn work? You may have been accustomed to think of God as working outside of you, in his mighty works; but here you are led to see God working *within* you, through the thinking of your own mind and the emotions of your own heart. Without working any miracle, doing no violence to any part of your nature, interfering not in the slightest with your free-will agency, the Spirit, nevertheless, leads you to reflect upon your eternal state. Oh! how near God has come to you! Have you welcomed the heavenly guest, or have you insulted him? Have you said, "Come in, my Lord—come in," or have

you shut the door in his face? Let the Spirit leave you to the tendencies of your own heart, and the black darkness of an eternal night, which no star of hope can ever gladden, will wrap you up in its funereal pall. Oh! with all the earnestness of love, I entreat you to beware!

I have spoken of the different means which the Spirit employs, and of the great variety of his modes of teaching; but let it be remembered that the *object* to which he leads is ever the same. It is the unchanging Saviour. The question is not, then, how were you led to see yourself a lost sinner, nor how intense have been your convictions, nor how long were you in a state of alarm about your soul, but are you in Christ now? It is not can you fix the day or the hour when you were converted, but are you now a believer?

The great work of the Spirit is to lead to Jesus, and where this has not been done, the Spirit is still resisted and grieved. And it is to a living, loving Christ that he seeks to lead us; not to a mere theory—not to a bare abstract doctrine, but to an ever-present, personal Saviour. On this point an eloquent writer says: "The prerogative of our Christian faith—the secret of its strength is, that all which it has, and all which it offers, is laid up in a *person*. This is what has made it strong when so much else has proved weak, that it has a Cross in its middle point; that it has not a circumference without a centre; that it has not merely a deliverance but a Deliverer—not a redemption only, but a Redeemer as well. Oh! how great the difference between submitting to a complex of rules, and casting ourselves upon a beating heart—between accepting a system, and cleaving to a person!"

Another has said: "We must learn from Scripture to feel that the centre of the universe is one living person—God and Man, not a dogma or a Pope."

Dear reader, to that one living Christ the Holy Spirit has long been seeking to lead you. I might enumerate a great many obstacles in the way of your yielding to his sacred influence, but all have their root in one—that is, UNBELIEF. You have grieved the Spirit by ten thousand sins, but this is the one dark

source from which they have all sprung. That must be abandoned before you can know safety. Unless given up, it will prove the murderer of your soul. The Spirit seeks to lead you to Jesus —not merely as a friend, as a benefactor, as a teacher, as an example; but, first of all, he seeks to lead you to Christ as a SUBSTITUTE. As an old writer says: "Oh! unutterable exchange! The Sinless One is condemned, the guilty goes free; the Blessed bears the curse, the curse bears the blessing; the Life dies, and the dead live; the Glory is covered with shame, and the shame is covered with glory!"

### ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

Never does the gospel laborer feel his own helplessness more than when trying to lead an inquiring soul to Christ. He goes on to present the richest promises and the clearest exhibition of the plan of salvation. Over and over again he presents to the man before him truths so plain and simple to his own mind that he feels that they cannot fail to be at once understood; but to his great grief, his best efforts are met with some such remark as that made by Nicodemus—"How can these things be?"

In such cases we feel much disappointed. We have presented such clear and striking arguments, our illustrations have been so plain and appropriate, we have been so earnest in our desires to save a soul from death, that when we utterly fail there mingles with our sorrow for the sinner some measure of personal mortification. We forget that in regard to purely spiritual things the carnal mind is dark as perdition itself, and that its illumination is not by the might or the power of man, but by the Spirit of God. The young Christian often meets with much disappointment in his first efforts to do good, arising from his overlooking this fact. When the truth as it is in Jesus, in its full splendor, first breaks upon his view, it appears to himself so plain, so simple in its terms, so easy to be understood, that he thinks he has only to go and present it to his unconverted friends, and at once they will gladly receive it; but he soon returns, deeply discouraged, and feeling that "Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon."

Dr. Guthrie says: "We can imagine few sadder sights than an entire family, parents and children, all blind. A home where the flowers have no beauty, the night no stars, the morning no blushing dawn—a home where they have never looked in each other's faces; a blind father sitting with a blind boy on his knee, and a blind mother pressing to her bosom a sightless babe!" Now let us suppose that one member of such a family were suddenly to become possessed of the power of sight, and that he begins to describe, in the most vivid manner, the new wonders that have just broken upon his view,—how very little of his descriptions could the rest of the family comprehend? They must see for themselves to be able to take in his full meaning.

Religion is not a thing of creeds, and theories, and notions, and theological systems; if it were, the natural man might understand it, as he does any worldly thing, by the investigations of his own mind; but it is, in its practical saving energy, a thing wholly from God—a personal experience of God's renewing power upon the soul, and none but those who have passed through this divine change are competent to give an opinion upon the subject. Hence, I had rather listen to the most ignorant converted man, speaking upon religious matters, than to the most learned man who is out of Christ. The learned man may speak *theologically right*, but he is sure to be *spiritually wrong*; whereas, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Hence it is that men very ignorant in general knowledge have been so extensively useful in the salvation of souls—not, however, by their ignorance, but in spite of it; for when a man does good, it must be by what he *knows*, not by what he does *not know*. These men, though destitute of the learning of the schools, were deeply learned in the things of the Spirit, and could adopt our Lord's words to Nicodemus—"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

Let this thought deeply impress those of us who are engaged in laboring for souls, whether as ministers or Sabbath School teachers. We ought to spare no pains to get every qualification of the head, but let us be specially solicitous about the state of the heart. All the world over it is the heart only that can

speak to the heart. To make others feel the power of the gospel, we must not only be intellectually convinced of its truth, but it must come to us in the "demonstration of the Spirit," and in "much assurance." There must be no doubting, no half-heartedness, no hesitation, but a full walking in the light of God, on the part of him who would lead souls to Christ. The sight of the perishing must move our souls to deepest tenderness, and then we will speak the truth in love—a love that will breathe in our words, look from our eyes, beam in our faces, and break down the opposition of the gainsayer.

Said the Lord Jesus, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Christianity is not a system of doubt and uncertainty, but one of confidence and assurance. A religion of self-righteousness must necessarily be one of fears and doubts. Its hopes being founded on something *going to be done* in the future, it cannot *begin* in faith and confidence, but expects to attain assurance gradually, as character becomes more developed into holiness. Thus the self-righteous man doubts and hopes by turns, according as his efforts at self-improvement make him think well or ill of himself.

Faith in Christ's work, on the contrary, gives confidence to begin with, for it is founded on something *already finished*—the work of Christ. As long as the Christian keeps resting his confidence upon that, he will have no doubts, no fears, for it is something already done, and unchangeable; but if he keeps looking at self, he will have assurance one hour and doubt the next; he will be changeable as the veering winds. But if his faith rests securely on the eternal and unchangeable word of God concerning Christ, it is not possible for him to doubt his acceptance.

Take one passage for example: "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10: 14.) Now, to believe this is to lift the soul out of the region of doubt and uncertainty into confidence and assurance. But if our faith is made to rest upon *our own feelings*, we will have doubts, and we *ought* to have them, for we are in a very doubtful condition. It is not faith in Christ, in that case, we are

cherishing, but faith in ourselves—faith in our own state of mind. The more doubts a man has in such a case the better, as they may save him from settling down upon the delusions of a false hope. Said a good man: "If you want to be miserable, *look within.* If you want to be distracted, *look around.* If you want to happy, LOOK UP TO CHRIST."

A short time ago we had an accont of the execution of ten rebels. There they stood under the dark shadow of death, the coffins in which their bloody bodies were to be laid in a row beside them. The executioners have raised their rifles and taken the deadly aim; one word from the officer in authority, and the work of death will be over; but at that moment, we will suppose, a great and distinguished personage comes forward and offers to die in their stead. The Government accepts the offer, and soon an innocent victim lies cold and bloody in death —the substitute of the guilty. For his sake, on account of his work, the rebels can go free. The law has accepted the death of the substitute for them, and has nothing against them. They are no longer under condemnation.

But each man sits down upon his coffin, and begins to look *within himself* to find some good reason why he should go free. Sometimes they think they have found something, and then their countenances light up with joy; but it is only a fitful hope which soon disappears, and again they are wrapped in the gloom of doubt. Now, who does not see that the true ground of peace for these men is in what was done for them by their substitute, outside of themselves altogether? It is true that within their hearts there may be found love to the being that died for them, they may cherish a strong love and loyalty to the Government that accepted the substitute in their stead, and they may be determined for the future to be good and obedient citizens; but they were not pardoned, they were not permitted to go free, because they possessed these feelings, but simply because one died in their stead. That is to be the true ground of their confidence, and not any thing in themselves.

See, then, the vast difference between Christ's religion and all false systems. It places pardon of sin as a present blessing,

*now* in possession. All false systems make it something in the future, to be obtained when the feelings and character of the sinner are in a state to deserve it. It founds peace upon something already *done*, they upon something *going* to be done. It builds the hope of the sinner upon something *outside* himself, they upon something *within* himself. It lifts the soul to God, to rejoice in his favor, and to live in the light of his smiles; they turn the soul in upon its own guilty self, to wander about, seeking comfort and finding none, amidst the dark uncertainties of its own feelings.

It is very evident that a religion of assurance, and not of doubt, was that which primitive Christians possessed. When persecution bared the sword and scattered the disciples abroad, they could each say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." When thrust into gloomy dungeons, when dragged forth to bloody scaffolds, when wasting away in dens and caves of the earth, or when standing before tribunals of power, and under the angry glare of tyrants, it was not a poor, pitiful, shivering, doubting religion that could have sustained them. No, such times required a religion of strong, sturdy, vigorous faith that could say, "*I know* in whom I have believed."

Death, in its most fearful forms, never caused them to waver in their confidence for a moment. Some were cast from the Tarpeian Rock, and drowned in the Tiber. Some were burned at the stake. Many were put to death by crucifixion. Others were cast into the Amphitheatre, to be torn into pieces by wild beasts. But amidst the darkest and bloodiest trials their watchword was, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Dear reader, if you would be happy in time and safe in eternity—if you would be useful in the church, and a shining light in the world—if you would be saved from everlasting ruin, rest not in the darkness of unbelief. As the holy and devoted McCheyne says, "Your tears will not blot out sin. They do nothing but weep in hell, but that does not justify them. Your right views of the gospel will not justify you; you must be

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covered with a spotless righteousness. Your change of heart and of life will not justify you; it cannot cover *past sins*, neither is it perfect. Your amended life is still fearfully sinful in God's sight, and yet nothing but perfect righteousness can stand before him. Jesus offers you this perfect righteousness; in him you may stand and hear God say, 'Thou art all fair my love.'"

### A SAVING LOOK.

Our Lord proceeded to illustrate the saving truth of the gospel by a fact in the Old Testament history, with which he knew Nicodemus was quite familiar: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The people of Israel had been guilty of a great sin in murmuring against God, and as a punishment fiery serpents were sent among them, the wound inflicted by which was death. As individuals we do not live in a world of retribution, but of probation. But as nations do not exist as such in the eternal world, it follows that if they are to be punished for their sins at all, it must be in this life; and hence, in every age God's judgments have been poured out upon nations for their sins, and removed again upon their repentance. When the people of Israel humbled themselves on account of their sins, God caused a serpent of brass to be set upon a pole; "And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived."

This was God's remedy. It found the people in a suffering and dying condition, and wherever applied it wrought a perfect cure.

Let us suppose that we see a heaven-appointed messenger set out among the tents of Israel, to announce the glad tidings. The first tent he enters he finds a man in a dying state. The poison of the serpent has found its way to the very citadel of life, and he must soon be beyond all hope. With eager haste he tells the good news to the dying man, and bids him look and live. But, to his utter astonishment, the dying man begins in

feeble accents to tell him that he is at present *too ill* to be cured by this new remedy; that it could not be intended for persons so far gone as he is, and that he must wait till he is a little better before he can look and be cured.

It is in vain that the messenger tells him that the remedy was specially intended to meet his case; it is in vain that he plies him with the clearest arguments and the most earnest appeals; he has to turn away with a burdened spirit, and leave the sufferer to perish in his unbelief.

Ah! how like is this to the case of those who say they are too great sinners to come to Jesus just as they are, and that they must wait till they are better—till they have more sorrow for sin, more feeling and deeper convictions, before they believe in Jesus!

But we will suppose that the messenger enters another tent. Here he meets a case the very opposite of the other. He finds a man who has been bitten by the serpent, and through whose veins the fatal poison is hastening on to accomplish the work of death. He delivers his message of love, but the sick man looks up with an incredulous smile upon his face, and says, "It is very true I have been bitten by the serpent, but my injury is only a mere trifle—a slight scratch, that will not amount to anything; and there is, therefore, no need of my applying the remedy you speak of. It is in vain that he is told that his death is as certain from that little wound as if he were covered all over with wounds; just as one bad link in a chain will let the proud ship at anchor go upon destruction as well as if every link were bad. But he will not hear—he will not regard, but proudly wraps himself up in his fancied security, saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And again the messenger turns away with tearful eyes, crying, "Who hath believed my report?"

Now, how like is this to the proud, self-righteous sinner, who foolishly speaks about not being so great a sinner as others. If a man is a sinner at all he cannot be saved without a Saviour. As one leak unstopped will sink the largest ship, so one sin unpardoned will bar the door of heaven against the soul. Remember that it was *one sin* that brought the curse of God upon

our world; and had there never been but one sin in the whole world, Calvary's bloody offering would have been required before that one sin could be forgiven.

Let us follow the messenger into another tent. Here he finds the family suffering from the bites of the serpents, but they are busy concocting a medicine of their own. They are very faithful in mixing the different ingredients, very sincere in the application of their own remedy, and have the strongest faith in its success. They laugh to scorn the heaven-sent message. Its very simplicity becomes the object of their bitterest contempt. "What! saved by a look! Who ever heard of such a thing? What virtue can there be in gazing upon a piece of brass? Let silly fanatics believe it if they please, but as for us, we mean to follow the dictates of reason and the laws of nature." Thus they scorn the messenger away, and turning to their own nostrums, begin applying a plaster here and there to their smarting wounds. They pour the utmost dishonor upon God's remedy, and soon the yawning grave receives their putrid corpses.

How like this is to a class that boast of human cures for sin's deep-seated disease! They acknowledge that things in our world are fearfully wrong; that there is somewhere a fearful dislocation. Every hill and valley echoes the groans of suffering humanity, and the heart is wrung with anguish because the poison of sin is at work at its very core; and to meet the evil, forth spring a host of reformers, each with a cure of his own, each bitterly opposed to that of his neighbor reformer, and all only agreed in their scorn for God's remedy. "Educate the people!" shouts one: "let knowledge and general intelligence be spread abroad; let the people be taught to think for themselves, and all will be well." He, poor man, forgets that knowledge is a power for evil as well as for good, according to the direction it gets. Tennyson says, "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers." A very gifted intellect, high among the angelic throng, became a devil! and many a splendidly educated mind is now led captive at his will.

Others see the regeneration of the world in temperance, in political equality, in obedience to physiological laws, or in ghost-

ly mutterings from the spirits of the dead; but alas! they all agree in turning away from that loving voice which, sounding clear and distinct over our troubled world, says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me and be ye saved."

I lately entered a sick room, where a sufferer in great distress said to his attendant, "Turn me on the other side," but scarcely was it done when he wanted to be put into another position. Then he wished to be taken to another bed, and then to be taken back again where he was before. Ah! it was not a change of *place* that was required to give him ease, but a complete cure of his disease. And so poor, restless, distracted, *sin-sick* humanity seeks to get rest by turning to the other side, or by changing its bed, while it despises the perfect remedy which Jesus proposes—that is, the entire removal of the disease. "He saves his people from their *sins*."

But we will suppose, further, that the messenger has gone into another tent, and after delivering his message, is told by the wounded, with an air of great seeming candor, that they have no faith in the remedy he proposes, but they are willing to give it a fair trial; they will go out of the tent and look for a little at the brazen serpent, and then for a little at their own wounds, to see what effect is being produced; the whole being the effect, not of faith in what God has said, but of a desire to experiment and speculate upon divine truth, and thus cast dishonor upon Jehovah's word.

Such a man might go away unhealed, and report to others that he had tried the remedy, and that it had failed. But in this case the failure would arise from his using *his own remedy*, not God's. This experimenting and speculating upon the word of God, instead of believing it, is one of the most insulting and dishonoring forms of unbelief.

The cure of the dying was brought to them in the most simple form imaginable. It was not to send for a physician to make a long and minute statement of their case, to swallow some bitter medicine or to take some long and painful pilgrimage. No,—it was the simplest act that can be performed—*only a look!*

The wounded man might have applied a thousand balsams, and herbs, and medicines, but all in vain; he must be saved by a look of faith. He might have got down upon his knees, and with strong cries and tears implored God to heal him, but he would not have heard him; for while he seemed by his prayers to be honoring God, he was really dishonoring him, by refusing to be saved in the way of his appointment.

He might have gazed with deep feeling upon his wounds, and have shed many bitter tears of repentance over the sins that had brought this punishment upon him; but his tears, and groans, and lamentation could not have saved him—he must do as God bids him. To all such, Moses would have said, "Infatuated men, look up to the serpent on the pole!" And to all who are seeking salvation the Saviour says, "Look unto me and be ye saved."

The brazen serpent was lifted up for all who were bitten, "It shall come to pass that *every one* that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live." And our Lord said to Nicodemus. "That *whosoever* believeth should not perish." It was not a few of the wounded, the better class, or the worse class, but the *whole of them* that were invited to look and be saved. Their only qualification for looking was that they were wounded. In like manner Christ has "tasted death for every man." He is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Not one of these wounded Israelites could with truth have said, "There is no cure for me;" and in the great day of account no sinner will dare to say in the presence of the Judge, "No Saviour was provided for me."

The remedy which God provided was at once effectual. As soon as one looked he was cured. He did not need to go on for years, hoping for the best, and watching and waiting for symptoms of improvement. At once he was made whole. So faith in Christ brings to the soul a present salvation. Oh! look to him! Believe and live! A clear and earnest writer uses the following words: "It is needless for you to say, 'I can find no rest, I am so terribly bad. I try to live better, but it is all the same. The more I try, the worse I am. I try to keep the com-

mandments; I attend the public ordinances of religion; sometimes hear as many as three sermons on the Lord's Day. I do all I can, but yet I have not got peace; I am not happy—I do not know that my sins are forgiven.' Dear friend, all this is '*I*.' You must look away from this poor miserable, guilty, hell-deserving 'I' altogether. God says, 'I have found a ransom.' Has he found it *in* you or *out of* you? Has he said, 'I have found ninety-nine parts of the ransom, and you must find the hundredth?' Ah! no; he has found it ALL."

## GOD'S GREAT LOVE.

That passage of Scripture through which the Holy Spirit flashes the light of gospel truth upon the soul is ever remembered and repeated with pleasure. When pressed by worldly cares, amid the fiery darts of temptation, when becoming wrapped up in the dark folds of unbelief, and when the heart is ready to sink in despair, that text is remembered, and comes to the soul with all the power of a new revelation. The mind seems to take a new grasp of it, and "faith stands leaning on *that* word."

Perhaps there is no text in the Bible that has saved more souls, that is oftener quoted on earth, or more joyfully remembered in heaven, than our Lord's words to Nicodemus: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." These words contain a most blessed truth, and yet they must have sounded strange in the ears of the Jewish teacher. He would be willing to acknowledge that God created the whole world, that he governs and directs the affairs of the whole world, and that he will finally judge the whole world; but to be told that He loved the world must have somewhat jarred upon his Jewish prejudices. Nicodemus had been accustomed to regard the nation of the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, as the exclusive objects of God's love, and all the sinful, idolatrous world outside of that as the object of his hatred and wrath; and now to be told that the love of God had gone forth in its impartial yearnings after the whole race, was to him a new doctrine.

And indeed it is so wonderful, so glorious, and contains so much of God, that the unbelieving hearts of the children of men everywhere still find it hard to receive it. That God should love some very good men, who have loved and obeyed him through a long series of years, is only what might have been expected; but that he should love the whole world—the vile, the abandoned, the reckless—the swearing, drunken, blaspheming, God-dishonoring world—is apt to be regarded as too good news to be true.

Now, that God hates sin with a perfect hatred is a great fundamental truth. We can conceive of nothing more opposed to the nature of God than sin. There is no light but might be more dazzling, there is no darkness but might be more intense; but God and sin are absolute antipodes. Had sin its own way, unchecked, it would tear God from his throne, and banish him from his own universe. But sin is man's bosom companion—almost the only thing he can call his own. He loves it in his heart, and rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue. How, then, can God love the world, when this is the character of its inhabitants?

When it is said that God loves the sinner, this is not to be taken as *an approval* of his sins. Far from it. For example: Here is a holy woman, who has a guilty, vile, abandoned son, who is constantly going on in ways that fill her pure heart with loathing. Now, she hates his sins—his daily and hourly acts—with a perfect hatred; and yet she loves the son, and follows him in his lowest degradation with her tears, her prayers, and her intensest longings for his good. We have a similar illustration in the case of David and his son Absalom. That son had rebelled against his father—had gone forth at the head of a large army, to take possession of his father's throne, and even plotted against his father's honor and his life. But though David hated these acts of his son with a great hatred, he still loved the guilty son himself, as is abundantly proved by the wail of anguish which burst from his heart when he heard of his death: "O Absalom, my son! my son! would God I had died for thee!"

When God shows his love to the world, it is in a way that proves at once his great hatred to sin, and his great love to the sinner. Is there any love in the whole universe to correspond to that of the Father to his well-beloved son? That Son always did what pleased the Father, and his love to him was infinite—a love vast, boundless, without a bottom, without a shore; yet with that Son he consents to part, to save the souls of sinners! "God commendeth his love to us" by giving up his Son to die for the very sin we had cherished in our hearts. Oh! herein is love!—a boundless, fathomless abyss of love! for God's love to us IS TO BE MEASURED BY HIS LOVE TO HIS SON. Such a height and depth, and length and breadth of love as was unfolded in Jehovah's gift of his Son the world has never seen before—can never see again.

And yet man naturally doubts—calls in question that love. He can believe in other loves, confide in other hearts, lean on other arms. In short, he seems to take a malignant delight in raising mountain difficulties in the way of a love the truest, the best, the most tender and faithful that ever existed—a love that overlooks all distinctions, that overleaps all barriers, that extends beyond all sects and parties, and that shall fold in its everlasting arms millions of redeemed sinners, when the great pendulum of time shall stand still and the world's affairs shall be wound up.

Had God done no more than part with his Son as a parent parts with a child, to go for a few months or years from home—even that would be wonderful. Had he given him up to suffer for angels, it would have been an amazing sacrifice; but to die for sinners, that were not craving such a boon, nor appreciating the greatness of such a gift—men and women whose every breath was sin, and whose every action was one of proud rebellion against God; to die for them is an act of love so great that the mind finds relief from the burden of contemplation by exclaiming with the apostle, "It passeth knowledge!"

A friend of mine, writing from Scotland, mentions the following fact: A gentleman of his acquaintance had a little son that required to pass through a painful operation in order to save

his life. The child naturally shrank from the operation, but said, "Father, I will submit to it if you will go with me and hold me." To this the father consented. It was a painful trial to his heart. In the centre of a large hall, surrounded by a crowd of spectators, the father and son took their places, and the operation began. The son bore the excruciating pain with amazing patience and fortitude, till an exceedingly sensitive part of his frame was touched, when he looked up in his father's face, and in a choking voice cried, "Oh! my father!" These words cut through the heart of the father worse than the knife through the quivering flesh of the child, and there were few dry eyes in the hall.

So, who can describe the anguish of the Son of God when, bearing the terrible infliction of the curse of God due to our sins, he looked up into the heavens and cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" When, amid the quaking earth and the shrouded heavens, the sword of justice pierced the Saviour's heart, and he cried out, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" we see a still further display of God's amazing love; and as we sit down at the Cross, beside the beloved John and the pious Marys, and watch the whole scene to its close, we are compelled to say, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

In the gift of his Son for sinners, God's love has been put forth to its utmost extent. This cannot be said of any other attribute of his nature. His wisdom could devise still greater displays of design and skill than those we see in his works. His power could build up countless worlds and systems, more glorious than any he has yet made. But when he gave his Son, his love poured out its richest gifts. No better gift was kept in reserve for some future occasion. Hence, Jesus, in speaking of that love, could only say, "God *so* loved the world; and, as an old writer says, "There is an eternity of meaning in that little word *so*."

Dear reader,—is it not a solemn thought that if this love fails to melt your hard heart you are utterly lost, since God has no greater display of love to spread before you? Heaven's

richest gift has been tried upon you, and has failed to bring forth any response of love and gratitude; and now what must become of you? No better means—no more melting story of love can ever be told you; and if this fails to change your heart, there remains nothing before you but "a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, that will devour the adversary."

Learn, then, how vital to your salvation is faith in Jesus. God's best gift has been given, the proclamation of that great love has reached your ears, the blessed Saviour has been set forth crucified for you; but all will not avail you if you shut your heart up in unbelief against it. Remember that none are lost under the gospel dispensation because they are sinners, but because they reject the only Saviour of sinners. There is now absolutely nothing between you and pardon but your own unbelief. Only believe, and this moment you are a saved soul.

A little girl, when told of God's simple plan of salvation, spoke out the sentiments of many older persons: "Oh! that cannot be the way! If that were it, everybody would be saved. I cannot think that the way." She thought that to believe and live was too easy a way of being saved. Her mother replied, "Yes, my dear, *you* do not *think* it the way, *others* do not *think* it the way, and thus, *easy as it is*, thousands do not think it true, and are lost!" Thus men go on, putting their own fancies and notions in the place of the true and plain words of God. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

### JUSTIFIED OR CONDEMNED.

In our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus he gave utterance to no more striking sentiment than that in the eighteenth verse: "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already." Here the present and the eternal state of the soul is made to turn upon faith in Jesus. If the greatest sinner only trusts in Jesus, that moment he is forgiven. On the other hand, if he does not believe in Jesus, no matter what else he may do, he is under condemnation. That is a terrible word to every Christless sinner—"Condemned al-

ready!" Such persons are apt to think that at least they will not be condemned till they die, or till the day of judgment; and long before that solemn hour of death arrives, they hope to do so many good works, and produce such an entire change in their character, that they shall escape condemnation even then. But how should it startle such persons to read these words of our Lord—"Condemned already!"

Reader, you may have visited the cell of some poor man condemned to death by the laws of his country. The pallet of straw, the chains, the bolts, the darkness, the pallid face and anxious look of the condemned—all made a deep and sorrowful impression upon you. You looked upon a man condemned already! The day of execution might be a week, a month, or a year distant; but in the eyes of the law he was already as a dead man—he was condemned. So, my dear reader, is it with you, if you have not yet believed in Jesus. God's law has condemned you—his curse and wrath are now abiding upon you; and although in mercy he delays the hour of execution, yet sooner or later you will drop into hell! Unless you turn to Jesus you are as sure of eternal banishment from God as if you were already in perdition. But all this dreadful state of things may be changed in one moment by simple faith in Jesus. Then for you there will be no condemnation. God will accept of his Son's death as a ground upon which you can be forgiven and filled with unspeakable glory through all eternity.

Perhaps I could not illustrate the nature of faith in Jesus better than by the following narrative, taken from the *American Messenger:*

A pastor, weary and sad, was sitting in his study at the close of the Sabbath service, painfully putting to his heart the query of the prophet—"Who hath believed our report," etc., while the too-ready words would come answering back, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for naught and in vain."

He was roused from his reverie by a hurried knock at the door, which was thrown open before he could reach it, and Edward B——, a youth of fifteen, entered the study. Pausing for no word of salutation or of welcome, he said abruptly and with

impassioned earnestness, "I have come to ask what I must do to be saved!"

Startled by the suddenness of the visit and the agitation of his visitor, the pastor could only reply in the words of the apostle, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"Oh, I know that! I believe in Christ, but what am I to *do* to be saved?"

"Christ has fully satisfied divine justice," said the pastor. "What we have to do is to believe, to trust in him for salvation."

"Oh, there must be something more than that," said Edward, impatiently. "I believe in Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of men; but I am not saved, nor do I see how my believing in Christ can possibly save me."

"Do you believe yourself to be a condemned sinner in the sight of God, Edward?"

"I do indeed! I feel the wrath of God resting upon me, and I want to know how I can appease that wrath, that I may be forgiven."

Edward's convictions of sin were so deep, and his desire for salvation so yearning, that his pastor believed that he had only to unfold to him the way of salvation through the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would accept it without the slightest hesitation, and rejoice in a full and free pardon.

"Your belief in Christ," he said, "is evidently nothing more than an intellectual assent to the fact that Christ came into the world to save sinners, whereas God claims the full consent of your heart to receive him as your personal Saviour, and until you do this you cannot in a saving sense believe in him. Your present anxiety arises from a consciousness of having violated God's law, which is holy, just and good, and you seek to be reconciled to the God whose law you have broken. The Scriptures assure us that 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' That is to say, by Christ's perfect obedience unto death, the atonement made by him is accepted of God, instead of the righteousness of the sinner, which the law of God demands. You can add nothing to Christ's work; it is finished—complete in all its parts. All that you have to do is *only believe*."

As he purposely laid a lingering emphasis on these last two words, he was pained to see the flush of pride mantle that youthful cheek, and the lip curl in scorn.

"*Only believe!—only believe!*" he exclaimed. "Do I understand you to tell me that I am to be saved without *doing anything myself* that will render me acceptable to God?"

The pastor now clearly saw that pride of heart was the obstacle keeping Edward from Christ, and resolved that he would press on him this point of simple faith, until he should see that it was the only door of entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and that he need cherish no lingering hope of working out a righteousness of his own.

After bowing their knees in prayer, the pastor looked anxiously at the face of Edward, and was disappointed to read there only a stubborn rebellion and an unyielding pride.

"Now, Edward," he said, "will you not receive this salvation as freely as God offers it? Christ has paid the penalty of your sins, and only asks you to take the pardon he has purchased. Do you, my young friend, accept his grace?"

"*No, Sir!*" answered Edward, with a fearful emphasis; "I cannot take pardon as a free gift. I am willing to purchase it by any sacrifice or any service but I can never humble myself to take it for nothing."

"I am authorized to offer you no other terms," said the pastor, sadly.

"I might then have saved myself the trouble of coming here in such a wild night as this!" exclaimed Edward, as he rushed from the study even more hurriedly than he had entered it.

The following day, as the pastor and his wife were at their morning repast, a click of the latch drew their eyes towards the parsonage gate. Edward was there, and a glance was sufficient to reveal the wholly changed expression of his countenance.

"Oh, sir!" he exclaimed, as he entered the room, "Christ is a glorious Saviour! His salvation is a glorious salvation!"

"With what have you purchased it, Edward?" demanded the pastor.

"Oh, it is its freeness that is its glory! I see it now. I was so full of rebellion against God's plan, and so angry at you for refusing to argue with me, and insisting on the *only believe*, that for a long time after I left you I was in despair. I did not see how my sins could be forgiven. After hours of sleepless agony, finding no relief anywhere, my pride yielded, and I cried earnestly, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' At the same moment my heart gave its full consent to the truth I had so long resisted. Foolish boy that I was, to think I could purchase such a salvation by any poor services of my own!"

"Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God!" exclaimed the encouraged but humbled ambassador for Christ, as he entered his study, to resume his work for his Master.

Thirty years of Christian fidelity have proved the genuineness of Edward's conversion, and to-day his most favorite hymn is:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
In my hand no price I bring—
Simply to thy Cross I cling!"

## LOVING DARKNESS AND HATING LIGHT.

Our blessed Lord concluded his instructions to Nicodemus by placing the blame of sin where it truly belongs. He showed that Sin is not man's misfortune, but his guilt; that he is not a sinner because of his circumstances, or his education, or his temperament, but from deliberate choice: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

In the Scriptures a sinful state is very frequently represented as a dark state. Hence hell is represented as "the blackness of darkness," because it is *all sin there.* When sinners get themselves wrapped up in the darkness of sin, they hate the light of God's truth, even when professing to receive it as truth. They will admit the doctrine of their responsibility to God, and

even wax eloquent in speaking of the greatness of that truth, and yet they will continue to live as if there were no God looking on. They will acknowledge the abominable nature of sin, and yet go on rolling it as a sweet morsel under their tongues. They will profess to believe in the name of Jesus, yet they are not saved from their sins; and while they profess to receive the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, yet they do not seek to depart from all iniquity. They say that God is the hearer of prayer, and yet they never bow the knee to him, and their homes are as destitute of a family alter as a family of Hottentots.

Now this is what God calls "holding the truth in unrighteousness;" and when the full light of eternity shall fall upon such, they will be found standing in speechless horror, unable to frame a single excuse for themselves. They have known their master's will, but have not done it, and shall therefore be beaten with many stripes. To their state in the world of woe applies the description of the poet:

"And there came groans that ended not, and sighs
That always sighed, and tears that ever wept
And ever fell, but not in Mercy's sight;
And Sorrow and Repentance, and Despair
Among them walked, and to their thirsty lips
Presented frequent cups of burning gall.
And as I listened I heard these beings curse
Almighty God, and curse the Lamb, and curse
The earth, the resurrection morn, and seek,
And ever vainly seek, for utter death.
And to their everlasting anguish still
The thunders from above responding spoke
These words, which, through the caverns of perdition
Forlornly echoing, fell on every ear:
'*Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not!*'"

Perhaps in nothing is the hatred of light which sinners feel more clearly seen than in the *demon-like* pleasure which they evince when a professor of Christianity falls into any gross sin. Let such an event occur anywhere in our midst, and there is not only a jubilee in hell, but shouts of joy among the children

of the devil on earth. They will eagerly gather around such a case like vultures around carrion, and greedily feast upon what to them is evidently a delightful repast. From the most polite and fashionable scenes of vice, away down to the lowest haunts of human pollution, the story will be taken up and repeated, with a thousand exaggerations, to admiring and applauding hearers. It is to them "glad tidings of great joy," which they find no difficulty in believing on the most flimsy evidence, or on no evidence at all, though they profess their inability to believe the "glad tidings" that come from heaven, backed by the authority of the God of truth.

And yet what does such a case of apostacy prove? Not that religion is a bad thing, but that bad men like themselves, from corrupt motives, will sometimes profess it. Neither does it prove that the church is corrupt, for she instantly casts the offending member out of her midst. But this exultation over what causes good men the deepest sorrow, only proves the hatred of God and of all good which reigns in the carnal mind. They hate the light and love darkness.

### COMING TO THE LIGHT.

"He that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." Here our Lord draws a beautiful picture of the man of God. While many are contented with only *speaking* about truth, or *hearing* about truth, or contending in a bitter, controversial spirit *for* truth, the child of God "*doeth truth.*" He is a living, walking, moving representation of the power of Christ's truth. His preaching of truth is the eloquence of a godly life and a pious conversation. Men may sneer at religion in the abstract, but they cannot sneer at his consistent life. The boldest wickedness is silent in his presence, and shrinks from the glance of his eye. He is one of those of whom Jesus says that he "is not ashamed to call them brethren." The mere professor, who makes a high-sounding declaration of his attachment to truth, but wounds it every day by his inconsistent life, Jesus is ashamed of; but in regard to the man who doeth truth, the

Lord can point to him as a true, lovely representation of himself. He can point to him as he did to Nathaniel, and say, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

The man who doeth truth follows his convictions of truth, wherever they may lead him. He does not stand on the verge of some important step to which truth is pressing him, and tremblingly ask "What will the people say?" or "Will not my friends all desert me if I take this step?" No; with such a man to know his duty is to do it. He follows the right, and leaves consequences to take care of themselves, or rather leaves God to take care of them. If following the truth leads to poverty, to persecution, to a prison, or even to the scaffold, he will follow it. He knows that the God of truth is on his side, and will never forsake him, and that all his present apparent losses will be made to count great and infinite gain.

It is men animated by such principles that have been the great benefactors of the world. The poor, miserable, truckling, time-serving race wait till great truths become popular, and then profess their wonderful attachment to them; but men of God hurl into the wide, weltering mass of error around them the most unpopular truths; and with such conduct your bowing, scraping, smirking, drawing-room dandies, who think it the very height of politeness to have no principles at all, are vastly offended. But these are the men to whom the world is indebted for its greatest reforms—men of a bold, daring, independent spirit, that, as one says, "is like electrical fire, that acquires force by resistance, and gathers increase of splendor from surrounding gloom."

Dr. Ferguson says that the characteristics of the great man are —"that in spirit and intent he stands erect, speaks with a tongue of fire, expresses his inmost soul in his doings, lets go of self in pursuit of his chosen object, and is willing to lose everything for it." If this be correct, then there can be no true greatness where the principles that Jesus here describes are wanting. To fix the eye upon Jesus, and follow him whithersoever he goeth, regardless of all consequences, while his words ring in our ears and vibrate through our hearts, urging us on to increased activity in

his service, is a truly noble sight. Such a man will be useful while he lives, and long after he dies, and his soul will be welcomed into glory among the vast multiude of whom the world was not worthy. Such a man stands—

> Like some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm ;
> Around whose base while rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Our Lord says of the good man, that he comes to the light. He does not hate it, nor is he afraid of it. Why should he be? He has nothing to conceal. If there is anything in his views or his conduct that is not right, he most earnestly wishes to know it. He is not afraid of close, pungent, faithful preaching. He lays his heart open to the light, and prays with David, "Search me and try me, O God, and see what wicked way there is in me." He does not turn away from that kind of preaching, and those passages of Scripture that make him condemn himself; on the contrary, he loves to be thus searched and sifted, that he may be preserved from self-deception. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

In prayer, both public and private, he places himself directly under the light of God. God is "the Father of Lights," and he invites us, under a consciousness of our ignorance and darkness, to go to him for wisdom and light. Prayer, then, is a most direct way of coming to the light, and all other ways will avail but little where this is neglected. Hence it is that the prayer-meeting is one of the most important means of grace that the church possesses.

The pulpit may be filled by an eloquent and faithful minister; the pews may be filled with a respectable and an intelligent congregation; the public worship may be conducted in a splendid house, and the financial affairs of the church may be in a flourishing state; but if the prayer-meeting is not filled from week to week by a band of wrestling Jacobs, the church will be utterly powerless in accomplishing the great end of her existence—the glory of God in the conversion of sinners. Many a minister has labored for years, with a self-consuming

zeal, and, worn out at last, has gone down to a premature grave without seeing much good accomplished, because he was not sustained by a praying people.

"It is *only* a prayer-meeting!" is a remark which we often hear from the lips of professing Christians. Such persons will run from place to place to hear the eloquent sermon or the exciting lecture; they will sit for hours amid the noise and wild excitement of the political meeting; but the prayer-meeting—oh! what a weariness of the flesh *it* is to them! There they sit, with lifeless faces, their whole frame seemingly oppressed with an unsufferable languor;—they yawn and doze away the hour of prayer, and the last "Amen!" breaks upon their ears as a joyful sound. Oh! what long centuries of spiritual desolation and death must pass over the world before it will be converted by *such* Christians!

A leading agent in the formation of one of our Missionary Societies was asked how it began. The reply was, "In prayer." "And how has it been sustained?" "With prayer." "And what has most contributed to its prosperity?" "Prayer!" was still the reply. Now, the true Christian feels the truth of this, and hence prayer is his constant refuge.

Would he see his minister become more spiritual, more faithful, and more successful in winning souls, he knows this can be accomplished—*not* by finding fault—*not* by seeking to alienate the minds of the brethren from the pastor—*not* by making invidious comparisons between him and others—*not* by praying *at* him, as is sometimes done by those who make their pretended prayers to God the channel through which to vent their personal spleen, but by praying *for* him as the Bible directs.

Does he see the church of which he is a member prostrated by worldliness and formality, conversions few and far between, sinners becoming hardened under the preached word, and professors living as if time were eternity and eternity time, he knows that the remedy for this state of things is not to go about filling every ear with complaints about the church, but in believing prayer, for "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

The richest boon that Heaven can bestow upon a soul on earth is the spirit of prayer. A man possessed of this spirit can never be poor, for he has everlasting riches for the asking. All things pertaining to life and godliness are within the call of his praying breath. The prayers that he offers to God are inspired by God, and therefore must be heard. "The spirit itself maketh intercession within us with groanings that cannot be uttered." Ah! these are the prayers that reach heaven! We often hear prayers offered mingled with groans that *can be uttered*, as mechanical and formal as a hand-organ grinding out a tune to which it has been set; but the prayer which the spirit inspires always reaches heaven, and brings down blessings as imperishable as the throne of God.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PRECIOUS TRUTHS FOR PERISHING SINNERS.

Luke 15.

What a model for Christian ministers are the discourses of the Lord Jesus! For faithfulness and point, for adaptedness to the state of those to whom they were addressed, for the fullness and beauty of their illustrations, for their clearness of thought and simplicity of style, for solemnity of manner and pungency of appeal, and for their holy unction and the power with which they grapple with the conscience and make the individual hearer feel that he is personally spoken to, these discourses should be studied again and again by all who would be successful in winning souls to God.

In the present day there is great danger of the pulpit losing its power through worldly ambition. There is a disposition to put mere oratory and a flashy rhetoric, the displays of intellect and genius, in the place of the simplicity of gospel truth. There is a great desire, in certain quarters, for brilliant, talented and learned sermons, chiefly by those who do not like to have their consciences touched by the power and point of God's naked truth. The power of the pulpit must ever consist in faithfully exhibiting God's truth in its holy simplicity, and in the burning words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Where this is wanting, though there may be seeming success for a time, the pulpit will lose its hold upon the hearts and consciences of the masses of the people.

A very intelligent man said some time ago, "Oh! that my pastor would give us something besides pretty flowers, and brilliant periods, and intellectual treats! My soul is famishing for the bread of life! I long for something simple—nourishing—scriptural." That great statesman, Daniel Webster, uttered

these words: "If clergymen in our day would return to the simplicity of gospel truth, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from St. Paul, and preach from the newspapers. When they do so I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, 'You are mortal—your probation is brief—your work must be done speedily; you are immortal, too—you are hastening to the bar of God—the Judge stands before the door.'"

It was the glory of the Redeemer that he was the friend of sinners—that he came to seek and to save the lost. The proud, haughty, self-righteous Pharisees made this an objection against him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." From this objection, as a kind of a text, our Lord delivered the wonderful sermon contained in this chapter. In these beautiful parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son—he brings out man's utterly lost condition, and God's great willingness to save him. The blessed Saviour at once announced it as the very object of his coming into the world to save sinners. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." It was announced—"His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." So that it was his very office to save sinners; and had he failed in this, it would have been the highest evidence that he was not the promised Messiah. Hence, that which the Pharisees made an objection was his highest glory—a strong testimony and credential that he was the sent of God.

These Pharisees said that Jesus "receiveth sinners." That is true, but not the whole truth; he does far more than that. To simply receive sinners is an act of great condescension and love; but he goes after sinners, and urges and invites them to be saved. He came to *seek* as well as to save the lost. Thus he follows the lost sinner down the broad road to death, and cries, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." And when sinners

will not listen to his pleadings, and he sees them rushing on to their ruin, he cries, as one deeply grieved, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." "How often would I have gathered you together, even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, but ye would not!"

In the beginning of the chapter it is said—"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him." This was a most glorious spectacle! The poor lost soul approaching its God, to hear of its condition and to learn its destiny!—the trembling, despairing sinner drawing near to the holy, compassionate Saviour, and drinking in salvation from his lips! Oh! this was indeed a blessed sight!—a sight over which angels rejoiced; and yet there stood at a distance these Scribes and Pharisees, the leading professors of religion of the day, with scowling brows and flashing eyes, grumbling and finding fault at the sight. This was a melancholy spectacle. The professed ministers of religion fighting against religion in its purest forms. The disciples of Moses scowling upon him of whom Moses said, "Him shall ye hear in all things." The professed servants of God angry because sinners are returning to God. Oh! to what strange inconsistencies will pride of heart lead men!

But God makes the wrath of man to praise him. This very murmuring of these proud and unreasonable men called out those parables from the lips of Jesus; and thus from the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of these bigots God brings forth truths, and illustrations of truths, which have saved, and will yet save, thousands of souls. Why do the people rage against Jehovah, and set themselves in array against his plans? As great heaps of chaff before the whirlwind, as stubble before the devouring flame, shall all opposition be before Him "who worketh according to the counsel of his own will."

Let us now call the attention of the reader to the three parables contained in this chapter.

### THE LOST SHEEP.

The Lord Jesus did not fear to associate with the most abandoned, and to go down to the very bottom of society, among its

very dregs, in order to save the lost. In this respect he is an example for all gospel laborers.

A lady, while passing along one of our public streets, in pulling off her glove pulled from her finger a very valuable jeweled ring, which, before she could secure it, rolled into the gutter. She stood hesitatingly on the brink of the filthy puddle for a few moments, as if considering what to do, when she bared her fair arm, and plunging her hand into the gutter secured her treasure. Ah! there is the treasure of the precious soul lost in many a vile sink of human pollution, and to save it we must be willing to follow the Saviour's example, and to go to the vilest outcasts with the glad tidings of salvation.

From the parable of the lost sheep we are impressed with the thought of the Saviour's deep personal interest in every sinner. *One* sheep went astray, and his careful shepherd missed even that one. The sinner, in his wanderings, is apt to think that Christ does not notice him; that amid the vastness of the affairs of the universe which occupy the divine mind, he, if not overlooked, is but little attended to. But this is a dangerous mistake. There is not a step which the sinner can take in his departure from God which the watchful eye of the shepherd does not follow; and the loved child is not more surely missed from the affectionate family circle, than is every sinner who departs from the living God. Yes, sinner; all the way through your downward progress—while resisting the Spirit—while hardening your heart against the invitations of mercy—while plunging into the most thoughtless and reckless course of sin, the pitying and yet rebuking eye of the Lord has been upon you. The heart of love that was pierced by the soldier's spear has yearned over you and longed for your return.

The Shepherd is represented as *going after* the lost sheep. It would never be found unless he did. There are many of our domestic animals, that when lost, will find their own way back to their home; but it is not so with the sheep. It, if lost in the wilderness, is hopelessly lost—it never finds its way back to the fold. And so it is with the sinner. No sinner, if left to himself, would ever come back to God. It is the very nature

of sin to be progressive, to perpetuate itself, and, like a deadly leprosy, to spread over the whole soul. Hence, if left alone, the sinner would go farther and farther from God. Sin makes the soul heavy as lead, and instead of rising to God and heaven, it sinks down to hell by its own weight. To insure the destruction of the sinner God has no need to push him to destruction, but simply to let him alone. For God to let any sinner alone is a fearful calamity, for in that case the sinner will surely destroy himself.

How glorious, then, the truth contained in the parable, that as soon as the sheep was discovered to be lost, the Shepherd went after it. As Dr. Cumming has beautifully said: "That glorious promise, sounding amid the wreck of paradise, was the first footfall of the Son of God coming after the lost sheep. Those prophecies spread through two thousand years—those calls, remonstrances and warnings, lifted up in the successive centuries of the past, were the voices of the Shepherd sounding in the wilderness after the lost sheep. Those types and symbols, and sacrifices and shadows—those ceremonies and institutions of the Mosaic dispensation, were the footprints upon the sands of time of the Great, the Good Shepherd, in his compassionate march from the throne of heaven to the Cross of Calvary, in order to retrieve and recover the lost sheep."

But to bring this matter still closer home,—what efforts the Great Shepherd has made to save each of us personally! Let me briefly describe the moral history of one person, and with the exception of a few details, it is a history that applies to tens of thousands in this highly favored land. This individual was blessed with pious parents. From his earliest remembrance he had knelt at his mother's knee and lisped out his infant prayer. When he arrived at years of responsibility his pious mother used to take him into her room, read the word of God with him, and, lifting up her voice to heaven, plead as if she could take no denial for the salvation of his soul, Thus was the Shepherd seeking this lost sheep through the instructions and the prayers of the faithful mother.

But the time came when he must leave the paternal roof, and

go forth into the world. The last night he spent at home was one never to be forgotten. His room was separated from his mother's only by a thin partition, and when he retired to rest he heard her earnestly engaged in prayer. He slept and awoke, but still he could hear that voice of pleading earnestness, and he knew that the salvation of his soul was the chief burden of those midnight wrestlings. In the morning she followed up her prayers by the most affectionate and faithful counsels; and as he waved his farewell from the top of the stage-coach which bore him away, the last sight he had of that mother she was standing with hands clasped and eyes upraised to heaven, breathing a prayer, he doubted not, for his salvation. Yet he left that pious home unsaved; but oh! what powerful influences had the Good Shepherd put forth for his good!

At first the restraints of his early training and sweet home influences kept him from rushing into sin, like many young men around him; but soon he began, cautiously at first, to join them in their sinful courses. He first dabbled around the edges of vice but soon madly plunged into its vortex. The theatre, the bar-room, the gambling-house became his nightly resort. His Bible was first neglected, then despised, then blasphemed. He first lived so as to be compelled to *wish* that the Bible were not true, and then by an easy transition he soon began to profess a belief that it was not true. This is the way that the great bulk of infidels are made.

But low as he had sunk and far as he had wandered, the Good Shepherd did not yet give him up. God sent a fierce disease to arrest him in his thoughtless career. He was cast upon a bed of pain, a burning fever raged through his veins, and day and night he tossed to and fro upon his bed. He saw his friends moving about upon tip-toe, and speaking to each other in suppressed whispers, and he knew from their tearful looks that they considered his life in danger. Then all his sins gathered around him and called for his destruction like avenging demons. He was in despair. Hell seemed to enlarge itself to receive him. He pleaded with God to spare his life, and promised if he recovered to live a Christian.

# THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP.

LUKE XV.

Contrary to all expectations, he did recover. But he returned to his sins, like the dog to his vomit. He seemed, if possible, to become more hardened and reckless than ever. He laughed at his former fears, and openly boasted of his infidelity. But even now the Lord would not give him up. His only child, a lovely little prattler, was taken sick. He bent over the cot of the loved one, and with a breaking heart watched the little sufferer step down into the cold flood. In spite of his fond attentions, and of a mother's burning tears, and all the medical skill that could be obtained, the idol of his soul lay stiff in death; and as he saw it laid in the cold grave, and heard the earth fall dolefully upon the coffin lid, his whole soul surged under a tempest of passion against God and his providences. He felt ready to curse God and die.

About this time the Lord poured out his Spirit in the neighborhood where he resided. It was a powerful work of grace, and converts were multiplied like the dew-drops of the morning. Many of his infidel companions were converted, and began faithfully to plead with him to be reconciled to God. At last his wife, who had heretofore been as gay and careless as himself, was brought to a knowledge of the truth, and now her tears and entreaties and prayers were joined to those of his pious mother for his soul's salvation.

But it was all of no avail. It seemed that the nearer the Shepherd came to him to save him, the stronger became his enmity to God and all good. He stormed and raged, and uttered hideous and new-coined blasphemies against the revival, against the ministers, and the people of God generally. He swore with a dreadful oath that he would not live with his wife if she made a public profession of religion, and threatened to shoot the minister whose church she wished to join. It was a fearful exhibition of the human heart in its deep hatred of God. And will not Christ give him up now? Will he not cut this bold blasphemer down? Oh, wondrous mercy! he again starts out to seek for this lost one!

One morning a dispatch is received that his mother is dying and wishes to see him. He has to travel several days before

he can reach his old home, and these are days of bitter reflection. That mother's love and teachings, and her efforts for his soul are all remembered. The scenes connected with his leaving home, and all the dark years of sin and madness that have passed since, are recalled, and conscience shakes his soul with its thunders. He would gladly flee from himself. Remorse is preying upon his soul with vulture appetite.

He is at last at his mother's bedside. The lamp of life is flickering in her bosom and ready to go out. He grasped her hand, already grown cold in death, and stood gazing in speechless sorrow beside her. She opened her eyes, and recognizing him, roused up her dying energies, and exclaimed, "Oh, John, will you not give your heart to the Saviour? Promise to meet me in heaven!" Before he could master his emotions to reply, the happy spirit had gone to its blessed home.

He retired to the closet—the spot where his mother in his young days had taken him to pray. He knelt on the very spot where she had often knelt. He felt himself a lost, undone sinner. He wondered at the mercy of God, who had spared him so long, and felt that he deserved to be shut up in hell long ago. He felt that in himself and in his doings there was no hope for him, and cast himself upon the merits of Christ. A sweet peace filled his soul, and he rose from his knees justified. The Shepherd had at last found the lost and wandering sheep.

Sinner, that Shepherd is seeking you now. In the pious friends he has given you, in the many privileges and means of grace you possess, in the many faithful sermons to which you have listened and the powerful revivals through which you have passed, in the deep and pungent convictions which God's Spirit has produced within you, in the terrible rebukes of your own conscience, and the appeals of Jehovah in the Bible, in the blasting of your worldly hopes, the crosses and losses you have sustained, the pains of personal affliction and the loss of dear friends,— in all of these you may hear the voice of the Shepherd sounding through the wilderness as he comes to seek you. This is not fancy, but solemn truth—not the opinion of man, but the honest testimony of the Bible.

The parable teaches us the joy of the Lord Jesus in the recovery of a lost sinner. "He layeth it upon his shoulder, rejoicing." As an old writer says: "You need not only his *eye* to light upon you, his *hand* to lay hold upon you, his *love* to go after you, but his *shoulder* to carry you." And over that recovered one that great heart of love rejoices. "He sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied." This was the joy set before him for which "he endured the Cross and despised the shame." The pious minister feels his highest joy, his greatest reward, in the conversion of sinners under his labors. He can say with John—"I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in the truth." So the Christian parent knows no greater delight than to see his children converted and taking their places in the church of God. But how much greater the joy of the Lord of angels and men when he sees the soul for which he groaned and died redeemed from the destroyer, washed from the defilement of sin, and fitted for an eternity of holy joy and praise! It is not merely the joy of success,—it is the joy of a pure and lofty benevolence.

How safe and secure is the soul that is thus recovered by Jesus! Listen to the Lord's own word's—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." John 10: 27. As God, having all power in heaven and earth, Jesus is able to keep his people. The perils to which they are exposed are very great. They are perfect weakness in themselves. They have a powerful and an insidious adversary ever watching for their destruction; but an Omnipotent Saviour has hold of them, and therefore let them confide with a firm faith in him who "is able to keep them from falling." The apostle Jude speaks of Christians as those "who are sanctified by God the Father, and *preserved* in Jesus Christ." And they are said to be "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Surely they are well kept whom God keeps. His omnipotent love around them like a strong fortress, what have they to fear? The word of the eternal God is pledged in their defence, and sooner would he forget all the

worlds that he has swung out into infinite space than forget one of those concerning whom he has said, "Behold I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands."

Who, then, can fix limits to the security of God's people? They are secured by the intercession of Jesus. "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." This was Peter's security amid all his fiery trials. And why should any one fear for whom Jesus is interceding? The Father hears him always, and he says, "Father, I will that those thou hast given me be with me, that they may behold my glory." Satan may rage, the gush of human sympathy to which we have been accustomed may be withdrawn, friends may forsake us, the world may frown, but if Jesus intercedes for us, and keeps us under his protection, all opposition will be but as "the fluttering of a wing on the breast of the eternal granite." "Better," as an old writer says, "to be buffeted into heaven than to be fondled into hell."

### THE LOST COIN.

Our Lord introduces his next parable in these words: "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." This parable is not a repetition, but it is presenting the same truth from another standpoint, and clothed in the freshness of a new illustration. In viewing some wonderful scene in nature the mind often gets entirely new impressions by looking at it from different standpoints. From one point we are struck with the soft and gentle beauty of the scene; from another point we are awed and overwhelmed with its sublimity. So it is with the gospel. It is the same great central truth—Christ crucified; and yet it can be viewed from so many points, and presented in so many aspects, that it is ever fresh and new. And throughout eternity it will be a new song. It can never be exhausted nor overestimated, for it is a deep lay of infinite love.

The minister of Christ need never fear, then, that by preach-

ing Christ constantly his ministry will become uninteresting to the people and fail through sameness. If he is diligent and studious, and his own heart is filled and fired with the love of Christ, evangelical themes will give to his sermons a freshness, a power, and a living beauty that will keep up an interest in his congregation from year to year that will never flag. Indeed, other things being equal, those ministers have the longest pastorates whose preaching contains most of Christ. The man who makes his sermons a compound of the moral essay, the literary lecture, and the exciting themes of the stump orator, may, judging from the crowds and the newspaper puffs that follow him, seem to succeed for a time; but the consciences of men tell them that this is wrong, and soon a reaction comes that sweeps him away, to seek a charge somewhere else; while his neighbor, who went quietly on preaching the truth as it is in Jesus, and commending himself to the consciences of men, continues to grow steadily in usefulness and influence, and in the affections of his people.

In the parable of the lost coin the first thing that strikes us is, that something considered of value had been lost. The lighting of the candle, the sweeping of the house, the diligent search, everything else being laid aside to attend to this matter, all showed that the thing lost was regarded as quite important. So when the soul of man becomes lost through sin, the most valuable object in the world is lost. Whether we reflect upon the soul's vast power of endless progress; its wonderful capacity of investigating the universe, from the lowest depths of earth to the highest star; its ability to hold converse and communion with the Great God himself, and there to find its highest delight; its rapidity of thought, by which it can move through the universe in the twinkling of an eye; or the great interest that has been manifested in it by all heaven,—we must see its amazing value.

The great value of the human soul is seen if we consider its immortality. That awful word applies to its duration — ETERNITY! — "the lifetime of the Almighty!" To look upon man as a being that must live as long as

God lives; that must live to see the sun expire in night, and every star go out in darkness; that must hear nature's expiring groan, and see the funeral of death; that must be eternally happy or miserable—a child of God's eternal love, or an outcast upon whom are forever to beat the storms of his wrath,—all this is so solemn that it makes us stand in awe as we gaze even on a little child.

How truthful and appropriate are the remarks of the Rev. Albert Barnes on this subject: "The very moment you attach the idea of *immortality* to a thing, no matter how insignificant it may be otherwise, that moment you invest it with unspeakable importance. Nothing can be mean and unworthy of notice which is to exist forever. An eternal rock, an eternal tree—plant—river, would impress our minds with the idea of vast sublimity, and make us feel that we were contemplating an object of unspeakable moment. Affix to it, then, the idea of eternal consciousness, though of the lowest order, and the mind is overwhelmed. The little humming-bird that in a May morning poises itself over the opening honeysuckle in your garden, and which is fixed a little and then is gone, is lovely to the eye, but we do not attach to it the idea of great importance in the scale of being. But attach to that now short-lived beautiful visitant of the garden the word IMMORTALITY, and you invest it at once with an unspeakable dignity. Let it be confined *forever* in a cage, or let it start off on rapid wing, never to tire or faint, beyond the orbit of Neptune, or where the comet flies, or where Sirius is fixed in the heavens, to continue its flight when the heavens shall vanish away, and though with most diminutive consciousness of being, you make it an object of the deepest interest. The little, lonely, fluttering, eternal wanderer! The beautiful little bird on an undying wing among the stars! What, then, shall we think of an immortal soul—a soul to endure forever—a soul to which is attached all that is meant by the word ETERNITY—a soul capable of immortal happiness or pain!"

The exceeding value of man's soul is seen in what Jesus has done for it. Men often put forth great efforts for very insignificant objects. But when we see the Saviour leave his bright

throne in the heavens, and become a homeless wanderer upon the earth, that he might save lost souls, we are able to form some estimate of the soul's value. When we see him constantly engaged, by night and by day, in the crowded city and the lonely wilderness, on the mountain and in the valley, in hunger and thirst, in pain and weariness, in seeking the lost soul that he may restore it to God, we read an emphatic commentary upon his own words—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Oh, yes; in Calvary we see how much is lost when the soul is lost! The Son of God covered with a bloody sweat—the loud cry of desolation that comes from his quivering lips—the darkened sun, the shuddering earth, the rending rocks, all nature convulsed to her centre, and all heaven moved with interest, prove the infinite value of the soul!

This is the precious thing that was lost. What a loss! The loss of reputation, of wealth, of health, of property, of life—all are nothing to such a loss as this. And such is man's position out of Christ. He is a lost sinner; the curse of God is abiding upon him; the sentence of condemnation has gone forth against him, and the only difference between him and the lost in hell is that for him there is hope, since a Saviour is seeking him, but for them there is no hope, because their day of merciful visitation is over—hope has gone out in despair.

In this parable the woman set about a diligent search for the lost coin. Nothing that could be done to effect this object was wanting. The house was swept, the furniture removed, the light caused to throw its beams into every dark corner, and everything was done that diligence and earnestness could suggest to accomplish the object. Her heart was set upon accomplishing it. And God has left nothing undone to save the lost sinner. Infinite love has put forth its utmost efforts, so that the question can openly be put to the world by the world's Lord, "What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it?" He has let down from heaven the great light of the Bible, so that no sinner might hide away in the darkness of ig-

norance regarding his will and be lost. That holy book comes to be "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path." Across the darkness of our nature's night it flings its blessed light, that we may see the loving Saviour that is looking for our return. The light of the Holy Spirit is also given, that we may be led to Him who is both the Light and the Life. "The life was the light of men." John 1 : 4.

When the woman illuminated her house it was with a special object in view—it was to find that which was lost. When God gives us light, it is that he may give us life along with it. If he enlightens the head, it is that he may renew the heart. Hence the very first announcement of truth that God made to man, after he became a sinner, was the promise of Christ. Light for his mind had wrapped up in it life for his soul. We talk about practical preaching and theoretical or doctrinal preaching. This is because we dare to put asunder what God has joined together. All God's preaching is practical. He never communicates light for the purpose of being criticised, speculated upon, or even admired; it is always to convey spiritual life. All of God's revelations to man, in all ages, whether through gracious covenants made with the patriarchs, or through altars, and sacrifices, and prophecies, all pointed to Christ, the life of the soul. Nothing has been revealed to satisfy vain curiosity, or to flatter pride of intellect, but all to save the perishing. The man sinking in a foundering ship does not amuse himself with a mere knowledge of the materials of which his life-preserver is composed, nor the way in which it was manufactured, but he at once applies it to the very purpose for which it was made—*to save him.*

In the woman's search for the coin much confusion had to be caused. The sweeping of the house would raise much dust, and many things would be distributed out of their places. When Christ comes seeking for the lost sinner he has often to cause great disturbance. Nations are convulsed, and mighty revolutions are caused by the onward march of gospel truth. "They who have turned the world upside down are come hither also. Wickedness is often highly conservative. It cries, "Let us alone. Why disturb us?" But, like the mighty sweep

# THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATT. XXV.

of a hurricane, Christianity comes to put them to confusion who oppose God and his Annointed.

Our best laid plans are blasted, our long-cherished hopes disappointed, our property taken from us, our health changed into pining sickness, our long-loved friends laid low in the grave,—but it is all done in love to the lost soul. As one of our noble and brave soldiers said, "I have lost my arm, but I am not sorry. If I had not lost my arm I might have lost my soul. I lost an arm, but I have found a Saviour; and I can say it is better to have Jesus and one arm, than to have two arms and be as I have been before—without a Saviour.

The woman in the parable sought for the lost coin until she found it. She did not abandon the search after a few fruitless efforts. So Jesus does not give up the lost soul easily. Oh, how intensely interested he is in your salvation, sinner! No mother was ever more anxious for the restoration of her dying child than is Jesus for your perishing soul. He sees the eternity of woe that is before you, the eternity of bliss that you will lose if your soul is not saved; and he follows you in your wanderings and seeks you in every corner in which you hide your guilty soul.

A Christian visitor gives the following account of how Jesus found a poor wandering sinner in one of our military hospitals:

I noticed in a distant part of the room a young man partially lifted from his couch, his countenance betraying more than ordinary anxiety, as if for something not within his reach. His cheeks were flushed, haggard and worn. Cautiously approaching his bedside, I asked—"Is there anything I can do for you?"

He looked at me for a moment, then said, "Yes, tell me of Christ."

"Do you know anything of him?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "but I want to know more of him."

For many months he had been lying in a loathsome prison in Virginia, suffering greatly from want, neglect and confinement, and but recently exchanged, had known little of proper nursing and care. Now it was refreshing to see how, in the enjoyment of

greater comfort, his soul yearned for the Redeemer, and could be satisfied with nothing less than his presence, under weakness and pain. I sat down by his couch, and read a few verses from Holy Writ, containing the last words of Jesus to his disciples as he left them for his ascension to heaven.

"Oh!" said he, "that is just my want!"

Finding that he knew something by experience of the love of Jesus, I asked, "Are you desirous of greater intimacy with him?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, my soul is starving for more of Christ —*more of Christ!*" he repeated as he laid himself back upon his pillow. "I want to feel," he added, "Jesus saying these words to *me* which he said to his disciples while with them on earth."

"He *does* say them to *you*, if you have only given yourself to him," I replied.

"I think I have, but I want to get Christ afresh—to feel certain he is mine."

"Give yourself anew to him by faith—consecrating soul and body afresh to his service, so shall you feel his salvation nigh, full and *sure* to your thirsting spirit."

So saying, I left him, thinking he might like to be alone, and soon after returned to hear him say:

"I have had a new sight of Jesus. He seems to come down to my wants—to feel all my doubts with me, and say, 'Doubt no more—trust fully in me.'"

"And such a trust!" he continued, "I have only to cast myself on him, as altogether vile and worthless, when he appears all in all to my soul."

"So precious!" said I.

"Yes" he repeated, the tears rolling down his cheeks, "*so* precious! I think I never felt him so nigh."

"'Abide in me,' says Christ, so shall you know the fullness of redeeming love.

> "'Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave and follow thee;
> Perish every fond ambition,
> Hangs my helpless soul on thee!'"

Clasping his thin pale hands, he repeated "Yes, hangs my helpless soul on thee. Oh, I can die now," he added. "It was just this I wanted—Christ to enter into my soul, so that I could feel *one* with him and he *one* with me."

Soon after, I bade him adieu, and yesterday, on going in again, found his place vacant. On inquiry, I learned he had died but a few hours before. His last words were, "Christ *my* Redeemer—*my All!*"

Dear reader,—if Jesus has indeed found you, then keep close to him all of your days upon earth. Do not, like Peter, follow him afar off; but put your hand in his hand, and let him lead you whithersoever he pleaseth, for be sure that he will lead you in the right way.

"My hand in Christ's!" He leadeth where he lists—
Through flowery fields or 'neath a starry sky.
My faith is strong; *He'll* bring me safely through
The ills of life till I am called to die.

"My hand in Christ's!" I fear not what may come—
If he is mine I cannot yield to sin;
His everlasting arms are round me here,
And I can safely trust my all to Him.

"My hand in Christ's!" I care not how death comes,
Whether by pestilence or in the fight;
I shall be safe beneath his gentle care,
Should the sun smite by day or moon by night.

"My hand in Christ's!" who bore up Calvary's height
The Cross, and gave his precious life up there
To save a wretch like me! Can I e'er doubt,
Or give myself a victim to despair?

No! let me cling the closer to his side,
And with a child's devotion hold him fast!
"My hand in His!" I'll safely pass along;
Though storms may howl, my home I'll gain at last.

"My hand in Christ's!" E'en down to death's cold flood,
He'll bear me conqueror through the dying strife;
And safe with those who've only gone before,
I shall have entered on that higher life.

## THE PRODIGAL SON.

Who has not admired the beautiful parable of the prodigal son? Like the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, it was brought out in reply to the objection of the Pharisees—"This man receiveth sinners." There are two great and glorious truths which it teaches with unmistakable clearness. The first of these is, that the fact that we are sinners is no longer a reason why we should stay away from our God. The younger son left his home, squandered his property, and sank into the lowest depths of degradation; but when with trembling fear he approached his old home, he found there a fatherly heart that still loved him, and a kind and hospitable welcome. His past conduct was not imputed to him at all, but he was at once placed in the condition of a beloved son. Thus it is that God treats the sinner that returns to him through the merits of Jesus Christ. No matter how far he may have wandered, or how deeply he may have sinned, he is heartily welcomed back to the favor of his God. His past sins are remembered against him no more. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not *imputing* their trespasses unto them."

The other great truth taught us in the passage is that we do not require to *work some good thing in us* before God can love us. The prodigal did not need to wait till he could win back all his lost property, till he could dress himself as well as he was when he left home, nor till he had acquired a good reputation, before his father would receive him. No; he came just as he was, in all his rags and his wretchedness, and was accepted—not reluctantly, but joyfully. It is true it was very mortifying to his pride to come home as he was. Pride would have suggested that he should at least place himself in as respectable a position as before, and then begin his approaches homeward. But he abandoned that as utterly hopeless. His all was gone, and the only ray of hope that shone upon his soul came from the thought of his father's free, forgiving love. He found that he did not require to do anything to *make* that love, that it had existed all along, even at the time he was sinning against it most and doubting it most.

And does not this illustrate most clearly the truth that the sinner may come to God just as he is through Jesus Christ? He does not need to provide a robe of righteousness in which to dress himself; let him come in his rags, and the love of his forgiving God will dress him in the best robe.

Let us now go over the different portions of this parable, and seek to discover the spiritual truths it is intended to convey.

The parable first represents man in his *departure from God.* The son was at home, surrounded with all the comforts of home, and secure in the affection of his father; but he became dissatisfied, and wished to depart and be independent. How like to man's conduct towards his God! Made after the image of his Creator, endowed with the noblest powers, placed in paradise, a type of heaven itself, with affections that could soar up to God's throne and hold personal communion with Jehovah and with the whole universe around him, reflecting like a mirror the glory of his Father, he yet became dissatisfied with his condition, and wanted to be something more and something better than his God had made him. He first rebelled against the Divine Father in heart, and then in outward conduct. When the prodigal's heart was estranged from his father, his home ceased to be a home, and became a prison to him. His body might as well go forth to wander, when his heart had already gone forth.

So when man's heart lost its trust and confidence in God, when he believed Satan's lie rather than God's truth, paradise became to him a prison; his God became an object of dread, from whom he sought to hide; that voice which once he loved to hear became to him a sound of terror—and all because he had now an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. There have been vast efforts of learning and of meta physical skill put forth to account for the origin of evil, but we will find nowhere a better explanation than that furnished by God himself: "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions."

When the prodigal had apostatized in heart from his father, he then went and demanded his portion of goods. He is going

to set up for himself, and demands his rights. As has been observed, his demand sounds as if he had been consulting his lawyer, and was particularly anxious to put his claim into strictly legal phraseology. The father made no opposition, but let him have his portion of goods. He saw that his heart was gone, and why should he retain his body?

God has given to us a portion of goods. It is those things which men possess in common, irrespective of their character. Our health, reason, time, talents, property, influence, are all given us by God to be employed for his glory. When, however, man takes these gifts and seeks to employ them independent of God, and even *against* God, he plunges into fearful guilt and misery. The prodigal not only used his father's property in a way that deeply grieved that father's heart, but in a way that brought wretchedness upon himself. One sets out in the pride of his heart to be independent of revelation. He sets up his own reason as a sufficient guide to him through the darkness of earth. By the dim taper-light of his own reason he tries to climb the loftiest altitudes of God's counsels, and to pry into the secrets of the Almighty. In the far-off land of scepticism and gloom his feeble reason plunges in hopeless confusion, his God-forsaken soul starving for spiritual food, which the hand of faith alone can reach.

Others take the time that should be employed for God, and use it in the service of the devil. Their property is all employed in the gratification of self, and in promoting their own little paltry interests. Their talents and influence are worse than squandered. Their life is an utter failure. They have spent their substance in riotous living.

What is meant by the prodigal son going into a far country? It is doubtless intended to represent the spiritual distance of the soul from God while in a state of unbelief. It is not a local or geographical distance, for in that sense God is very near us, "about our bed and about our path and spying out all our ways." It is the wandering of the soul—the alienation of the affections—the estrangement of the heart. It is that state of mind in which God is not in all our hearts: nay, in which he is often not *in any*

of our thoughts. It is that state of mind in which a man can live a whole day, a week, a month, a year,—nay, many years,—not only without fellowship with God, but in making the most strenuous efforts to exclude all thoughts of him from the mind. It is that state of mind in which a man lays all his plans for the future, all his schemes of happiness, all his designs in regard to his home, his friends, his business, without consulting God; yea, without taking the thought of an All-seeing God and an overruling Providence into the account at all. That God who is feeding and clothing him, who is fanning his heaving lungs, who is constantly sustaining his life, who is surrounding him with an ocean of blessings, who gave his Son to die for him, and who earnestly longs for his salvation, he not only refuses constantly to acknowledge in all his ways, but he practically lives as if He had no existence. This is living in the far country; it is the atheism of the heart, whatever may be the creed of the head.

This moral distance is often seen existing among men who once were friends. You have a dear friend, one whom you regard as the kindest and the best. Your love for each other has been like that of David and Jonathan. In his society your happiest hours have been spent. To him you went with your joys and your sorrows, and ever found a ready sympathizer. But now all this is at an end. Your friend is not shut up from your sight in the grave, he has not gone from you to other lands, you meet him on the street, your clothes may rub as you pass in the throng, but there is no recognizing look, no kindly word spoken, no warm pressure of the hand. There is a great distance between you now—not a geographical distance, for you may live in the same street or lodge in the same house, but in heart in feeling, you are wide apart.

It is this great moral and spiritual distance which sin has brought about between God and man. This is seen in the whole human family, from the earliest dawning of intelligence. As soon as conscience begins to perform its functions, and witnesses for the justice and holiness of God, there is a rising up of the whole soul in revolt against his government. Yes, on the

very threshold of life we take into our hearts the dark spectre, UNBELIEF, that ever speaks of distrust of God. Our consciousness of sin makes us dread to think of God, and that dread ripens into absolute enmity—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." When in this state of mind men put all thought of God as far away from them as they can. As you have seen a man bow a disagreeable visitor out of his house, so men put God far from them, saying, "Depart from us, we desire not a knowledge of thy ways." Oh! into what a far country has the sinner wandered when he has reached this state! And the longer he continues in it the wider becomes the distance between him and God, till at last he drifts into the dark sea of eternal death.

When the prodigal got into the far country we are told that he began to be in want. This was a sad termination to his high prospects of enjoyment. Doubtless he thought that if he could only be once independent, and get away from all parental control, his wants would all be supplied. But now his trouble is only beginning. He has reached the far-off land of hope and promise, where all his desires were to be gratified, but he finds instead that there is a "mighty famine in that land."

Thus end all man's attempts to be happy away from God. How strikingly illustrative of this are the words of Solomon: "I made me great works, I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees; I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle, above all that were in Jerusalem before me; I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor

that I had labored to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

In this connection the reader will recall the words of the accomplished and courtly Lord Chesterfield: "I am now at the age of sixty years. I have been as wicked as Solomon. I have not been so wise; but this I know, I am wise enough to test the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And after all that Lord Byron possessed of rank, and genius, and fame, listen to the melancholy wail that comes from his bitterly disappointed heart—

> "My days are in the yellow leaf,
> The flower, the fruit of life are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone.

What a contrast to this are the words of the distinguished Wilberforce: "I never knew happiness till I found Christ a Saviour." And the sooner we become convinced of this the better, that we may no longer fill our souls with disappointment and grief, by seeking happiness where it cannot possibly be found; for except those who have found peace in Christ, the whole race in the scramble after the world may be classed under two heads—those who *have been* disappointed with the world, and those who are *going to be*.

In this state of famine and distress, the prodigal "joined himself to a citizen of the country." We would have supposed that his sufferings, his bitter disappointments, his pinching wants, would have sent him home at once. But, no;—man's last resource is to go to God. When he fails in one worldly project, he turns to another; and as each new plan fails to give him the satisfaction he expected, he concludes that the reason is that he has not yet got enough of the world, and so with new vigor he takes a fresh start. God says make the tree good and the fruit will be good; purify the fountain and the stream will be pure. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Man thinks that his happiness is to be found *without*, when it is only to be found *within*. There can no more be happiness in a foul heart than there can be ease

and comfort in a diseased body. Man changes his place, instead of changing his inward state. He may run fast, and change his place often; but as long as the misery is within, he cannot flee from it any more than from himself.

This last change of the prodigal, accordingly, did not mend his condition at all; on the contrary, it sank him into a deeper degradation. In the house of this citizen he no doubt expected to be much happier than in his father's house; but instead, he is sent to be a swine-herd, the most disgusting employment to which a Jew could be put. He is tortured, too, with the pangs of hunger, and is glad to partake of the food of the loathsome animals he tends. Such is the degradation to which sin reduces the soul of man that he seeks to satisfy the cravings of his immortal part with mere animal gratifications. "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But the soul refuses to be satisfied with such paltry things, and sends forth its bitter wail of anguish as it feels itself cheated of all real good. The struggle of worldly men for the last six thousand years has just been an effort to satisfy their souls with swinish husks. The struggle is now kept up as vigorously as if the past read men no lessons of warning, and as if experience taught no lessons of instruction, while God utters from the heavens, "O, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

At last the prodigal begins to think. "He came to himself." Before this he had been acting like one whose wild imagination has broken the bridle of reason, and dashes furiously on to destruction. It was such a display of headlong passion as reminds one of "moody madness laughing wild amid severer woe." The expressions "self-possessed," "beside oneself," "losing oneself," are all very common and significant, and shadow forth the great truth that man's nature, made by God harmonious and united, has been rent in two. His soul has become a battle-field where two eternities conflict. Conscience pulls one way—passion another. The strivings of the Spirit, the convictions of right, the voice of early training, all lead in one direction; the promptings of the depraved heart, the

temptations of Satan, the fashions and maxims of the world, all lead in another direction. Thus there is a constant conflict, an internal war kept up in the human soul. Even the most intelligent of the ancient heathen seem to have felt that human nature was in this rent and torn condition. Xenophon says—"I must have two souls, for plainly it is not one and the same that is both evil and good, that at the same time wishes to do a thing and not to do it." "I see and approve the better things," said another, "and yet follow the worse."

The prodigal lost himself when he wandered from his home and from his father; and every sinner is, in a sense, beside himself till he returns to God through the Lord Jesus. He may be intelligent and learned—he may in the affairs of the world be distinguished by great natural shrewdness and common sense; but in regard to spiritual things—those things which God and angels esteem of supreme importance—he is far from being in his right mind. What but a moral madness raging in his nature could make him prefer the favor of man to the smiles of God—the enjoyments of earth to the raptures of heaven—the husks of sin to the manna of God's love! Surely "madness is in his heart."

The symptom of man coming to his right mind is when he begins to reflect. "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare." He thought of one heart that once loved him tenderly, of a loving home that once sheltered him, and as he reflected upon the past and contrasted it with the present, his soul broke down in contrition, and then came the resolve, "I will arise and go to my father." A great point is gained when the sinner is led to think of eternal things. Whatever it may be that leads to this, whether it be under the faithful preaching of the word or the afflictions of Providence, if he is only led to reflect upon his lost condition it will surely do him good. No man can honestly and earnestly take up the claims of God upon him and his prospects for eternity, and look them fairly in the face, without being led to feel his need of a Saviour. Sinners rush down to destruction because they will not consider.

A Christian father had a son whose conduct had nearly

broken his heart. He had prayed for him, instructed him in the things of God, and done all that his deep love for his soul and for his future welfare dictated, but all to no avail. He grew up a vile, hardened sinner, and left his father's home, young in years, but old in sin. At length that father was thrown upon a bed of death. Before breathing his last he sent for his prodigal son, and asked him to promise, after his father was laid in the grave, that he would spend one hour alone each day in that room, for three months. The son readily gave the promise. The death of his father made but little impression on him, and again he rushed on in his mad career of sin. That hour alone, however, was a great burden to him. He greatly dreaded it, yet did not dare to break his promise made under such solemn circumstances. At last one day the hour dragged along slower than usual. He had an engagement with some boon companions, and was in haste to go and enjoy their society. He often consulted his watch to see how the time passed. At last the thought came into his mind, "Why did my father lay upon me this strange obligation?" Then quick as lightning the thought flashed over his mind—"My father was a good man, he loved my soul, and it must have been for my soul's good he did this." This led him to reflect upon his father's love, his past life in all its vileness, his lost and desperate state as a sinner against God's holy law, till he fell upon his knees and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He spent not only the hour but the whole day alone with God, nor did he leave the room till it could be said of him that he "had come to himself." He came out of that room a converted man.

The prodigal had now come to the resolution of going to his father, but his mind was full of dark misconceptions about that father's character and his feelings towards him. He knew that his father *once* loved him, but that he loved him now, that he had loved him all along in his wicked wanderings, was something of which he could form no conception. He knew that he had wasted his all, and that he had therefore no price to bring in his hand with which to purchase his father's love; but still he felt as if something must be done to produce a change in

that father, to turn away the anger which he thought burned in his bosom against him. He thinks that it will require a good deal of pleading on his part to induce the father even to receive him as a hired servant.

This is a true picture of our depraved, fallen nature. We cannot think of God as one who has loved us all along, even in our worst days of rebellion against him. We think of him as one full of vindicative wrath, and when we think of becoming religious we think of doing something that will *change God* as well as change ourselves. We think of adopting such a course of good works, prayers, and holy living as will turn aside God's anger from us and give us a place in his love. Hence it is the most difficult thing in the world to lead the sinner to think of the gospel as God's free, full welcome to him to come just as he is and be saved. "God is in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself." But the sinner's idea is that it is God who first needs to be reconciled by a course of good deeds on his part. The unbelief of the heart rejects a present salvation, offered without money and without price.

The picture presented to the mind in the parable is inexpressibly beautiful. The son, clothed in rags, weak, pale, haggard, desponding, weary and foot-sore, is seen approaching his old home. He is very doubtful about his reception. He knows that he cannot be received on the ground of his riches, for all is gone. He cannot be received on the ground of the richness of his dress or the loftiness of his position. He is clothed in the habiliments of a beggar, and his position has been the most degraded. His only hope is in the prayer which he has been making up in his mind, and which he hopes will touch his father's heart, and gain him admission under the paternal roof: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." Oh, how little did he know of the depth of that love he had so long despised and grieved!

In the meantime the father sees his long-lost son, while he is yet afar off. The eye of affection is quick to detect its object under any and every disguise, and love is quick in its motions.

He *runs* to meet the long lost one. The son sees the father approach him—not with the frown of indignation upon his brow—not with the clenched fist of threatening, nor with the bitter words of upbraiding, but with the tear of compassion in his eye and words of affection upon his lips. The son begins his well-conned prayer, but it is interrupted by the kiss of reconciliation. The arms of love are thrown around him. He is to be arrayed in the best robe; shoes are ordered for his weary feet, and the whole house is in a state of joyous excitement over his return. Oh, how different is this from what he expected! How all his unbelieving doubts and his misconceptions of his father's true character are dispelled by the gracious reception he now receives! and how vile his former conduct now appears in the light of his father's love! The very love that gives him such a hearty reception at the same time produces true repentance on account of the past, and plants in his soul the principle of a true obedience in the future.

Sinner, this is a picture of the God with whom you have to do. He has followed you in your wanderings with ten thousand proofs of his love, though you have not heeded them. And even now he loves you still. You have nothing to do but to return to him through Jesus Christ, and your past sins will all be blotted out, and be no longer imputed to you. "Draw near unto me, and I will draw near unto you." You have no preparation to wait for—no new garments to prepare—no price to present; the Father is waiting for you this moment, while your eyes are upon this page. Rise and go to him through faith in his Son. Take all the blame of your guilt to yourself. Do not seek to palliate it nor to excuse it. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." And no matter how deep and damning may have been your sin, the God of love will receive you graciously and love you freely. He will put upon you the best robe, even his Son's righteousness; he will give you a place among his own children, make you an heir and a joint heir with Christ, and give you a place in his eternal home of love, to go no more out forever.

### JOY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS.

The Lord concludes the parables of the lost sheep and of the lost coin with the wonderful declaration—"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And the parable of the prodigal is concluded with an intimation of great joy over the recovery of the lost one. We know that there is great joy often on earth over the conversion of a sinner. We have often seen the praying mother rejoice with unspeakable delight over the conversion of her son. We have seen the pious father rejoice more than those who have found great treasure, when a letter from some distant land, or from the army in the tented field, brought him intelligence that the beloved son—the object of many prayers—had given his heart to Jesus. We have seen a whole church break out in raptures of joy over the conversion of some hardened, stout-hearted rebel against God.

But this joy is not confined to earth. The pure and sinless inhabitants of heaven, the holy angels, who have ever taken a deep interest in the affairs of our world, rejoice in the repentance of the sinner. This conception of the interest of angels in us is not founded on human vanity—not built upon an exaggerated idea of our own importance; it is founded upon the true words of the Lord of angels—the Creator of those pure spirits, who knows what is in their hearts. When we expect to go to a distant country, to reside, we feel anxious to know something of the character and disposition of those who are to be our neighbors and associates there; and in journeying towards heaven, how delightful to know that our future companions in that world of glory are those who have always been deeply interested in our welfare on earth. This knowledge seems already to introduce us to them, and to bind us together in love.

The higher any being rises in holiness, the nearer he approaches to God, the less selfish such an one becomes, and the more his heart burns with benevolence. Thus angels and good men unite in rejoicing over the same things, because filled with the same spirit. On the other hand, the more beings become filled with the spirit of sin, the farther they get away from God, the

more selfish they become, and the more difficult they find it to believe that there is any such thing as disinterestedness in the world. Thus Satan said, "Does Job serve God for naught?" As if he had said, he is well paid for his piety; he is making a gain of his godliness, or else he would be as wicked as other people.

Now all wicked people are filled with the same spirit of distrust in all goodness. No matter how devoted and self-denying a minister may be, they will insist upon it that he is only preaching for pay. When our Christian ladies leave their elegant homes, and, animated by the love of Christ, enter the low and filthy hovels of our cities, that they may do their wretched inmates good, they have been asked how much they are paid for that work. These victims of sin and selfishness could not conceive of any one going through so much labor and self-denial from a principle of pure love to their souls. They judge of all human hearts by their own, not knowing that the love of Christ makes a man a new creature.

The joy of the holy angels is excited over a certain state of mind, frequently in the Bible called repentance, It then becomes a most important question—What is repentance? It is often represented as a process of deep sorrow of mind and anguish of soul—a kind of mental purgatory through which souls must pass before they can be fit to come to Christ and exercise faith in his merits. Hence it is no uncommon thing for anxious inquirers, when urged to come to Christ, to tell us they fear that they have not repented enough yet, and that they must wait for more conviction and a deeper sorrow for sin before they believe in Jesus. Thus the mind is turned in upon itself, to watch for the progress of certain emotions which are supposed to form a qualification for coming to Christ.

This view of what repentance is, is all wrong. Looking at a man's own vileness will never produce repentance. A very forcible writer says, "I might just as well attempt to produce heat by looking at snow, to produce light by looking at darkness, to produce wealth by looking at poverty, to produce health by looking at disease, to produce life by looking at death, as to

produce true repentance by looking at my sins. True, I may look at them, think of them, blush for them, sigh over them, weep on account of them, tremble at their multitude, shudder at their magnitude, be appalled at their terrible consequences, and all the while not possess a single atom of true repentance —of repentance unto life. I may write out a catalogue of my sins, I may peruse and re-peruse that catalogue, I may see it to be as black as midnight—black as hell itself, and yet not be led to repentance."

Instead of repentance being a state of mind that prepares the sinner for coming to Christ, it is a state of mind which can only be produced by his coming to Christ. "Know ye not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Instead of repentance leading us to Christ, it is Christ that leads us to repentance. It does not go before, but follows after acceptance through Jesus. We are told he is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to *give* repentance to Israel," and hence we must go to him before we can have repentance. The storm and the avalanche may shatter the large masses of ice to pieces, but it is the warm beams of the sun that alone can melt them; and there is nothing but a believing view of the love of God in Christ Jesus that can melt man's heart. It is a change of mind about God, and that can only be produced by a believing view of God's love in Christ. The mind of the sinner naturally is "enmity against God," and nothing can ever change that enmity into love but faith in Jesus.

The moment a man believes savingly in Jesus he repents, and he never does before. What! can a man be a penitent who is still rejecting the Lord who bought him with his own blood? Can a man be a penitent who is still in soul-damning unbelief? —a penitent, and yet calling God a liar! No; there can be no true repentance till there is a full submission of the heart to God's way of saving us through the merits of his Son.

The time when the angels rejoice is well worthy of our notice. It is not when the saved sinner enters heaven—not when a long course of devotion to Christ ends in eternal life; but at the very beginning of his course—when he repents. Now

when a soul comes to Christ, and enlists in his service, there is a long war and conflict still before him. There are the remains of his carnal nature, the temptations of Satan, the influence of the world in its constant appeals to the pleasures of sense—these all tend to drag the soul downwards. The human soul is a battle-field, upon which a fearful conflict is raging between the powers of light and of darkness.

Why do not the angels wait till they see this conflict ended, and the believer come off more than conqueror? They are evidently believers in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints—a doctrine that is capable of being greatly perverted and abused, but which is still founded on the word of God, and full of glorious comfort to God's people. The angels rejoice when they see a soul start right, for then they have no doubt as to how the matter will end. They have seen the mighty grace of God triumph in the weakness of so many of his people, and bringing them through victorious over all their foes, that they have no fears of the final result.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints has been greatly misrepresented, and consequences have been attached to it from which every pious mind shrinks with horror. Most of the efforts put forth against this doctrine are not really against it, but against a mere caricature of it. We do not assert that all professors of religion will be saved, for many of them are hypocrites and self-deceivers; but we do assert, on the authority of God's holy word, that all who have been really converted, who have truly believed in the Lord Jesus, and whose names have been recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, are "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." On this point the words of Jesus are very strong and clear: "This is the Father's will who sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

But these promises are only for true believers. If a man is

not now living by faith in the Son of God—if he is not this moment persevering in faith, and love, and holy zeal, and in all the graces of the Spirit, but is depending upon some old religious experience in the remote past, what right has he to rest upon these promises?—what evidence has he that he is a saint at all? The perseverance of the saints is the saints' perseverance. That is, the only evidence that I can give that I am a saint at all, is that I persevere in faith in Jesus and obedience to his commands. A man once told me he had for many years been a professor, but that for the last ten years he had neglected all the duties of a Christian, and had lived a careless and ungodly life. "But," said he, "I have never given up my hope." I told him it was time he had given it up; that it was evidently a false hope, and would lead him to perdition. I learned that he was an habitual drunkard, and at the moment he spoke to me his breath smelt strongly of the intoxicating bowl! I had no confidence in a hope that had been so long preserved in whisky.

We notice also that the angels rejoice over *one* sinner that repenteth. If we put forth an effort for the conversion of souls, and but one is converted, we are oftener filled with a feeling of despondency rather than of joy. But the holy angels have such a just appreciation of the value of a soul that they rejoice when one is brought to Christ. Besides, the conversion of one soul very often implies the conversion of a great multitude, through the instrumentality of that one. When Peter was converted there was wrapped up in that fact the conversion of the three thousand to whom he preached on the day of Pentecost. When such men as Carey, Bunyan, Whitefield and Wesley were converted, what vast harvests of souls were implied in their giving their hearts to God.

Oh! then, let us labor for the salvation of souls with unwearied fidelity! Let us sow beside all waters, "be diligent in season and out of season," and God will bless our efforts, so that not only our own souls shall rejoice, and angels rejoice, but the blessed Saviour shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PRAYER THROUGH CHRIST.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 14 : 13.

Prayer is such a solemn act, it brings us so near God, it is so intimately connected with our spiritual life, it occupies such a large place in the teachings of the Bible, that it becomes a most important question—How can I present such prayers to God as he can consistently answer? How can I come to occupy the position of a prevailer with Jehovah?

Prayer is talking face to face with God. It is pouring out the desires of the soul in God's ear, and waiting in the earnest expectation of faith for an answer. It is not uttering words in which the heart has no sympathy—it is not the utterance of certain words, however scriptural and proper these words may be, but it is the whole soul poured out before God for blessings that we know we must have or all is lost—blessings which none but he can give, and which we believe he is willing to give if we ask them aright.

Now, this presenting of the soul's wishes to God is highly reasonable. We think it quite reasonable to present our desires for anything that we want to each other. The father regards it as quite reasonable that his child should come and ask him for what it wants. It may not be able to present its petition in eloquent and correct language. It may lisp, and stammer, and hesitate; but the tearful eye, the beaming face, the heaving bosom, tell that its whole soul is in earnest, and the loving father grants the request, if it be at all possible. "If you who are fathers know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him." If our neighbors want anything of us, we think it highly reasonable that we should hear them express

that wish to us; and why should it not be so between God and us? That Being who has given us our powers of mind and the ability to express our desires—who has placed us under our present probation, and is intimately acquainted with all the trials and perils of our lot—who has our whole destiny for time and eternity in his hands—who can sink us to the depths of despair, or raise us to the height of glory, has surely a right to expect that we will come to him in all our helplessness, in our sorrows and our joys, in our seasons of depression and elevation—in short, that we will "acknowledge him in all our ways, that he may direct our steps." A most reasonable act is prayer.

There is deeply engraven upon the human soul a conviction of the importance of prayer. Man is a worshiping being. Even the atheist, who courts the unholy distinction of living in a fatherless world, and who laughs to scorn the idea of prayer, yet when brought suddenly under the pressure of some great calamity, instinctively cries to God for help. There is a well-authenticated fact, which occurred in Canada, which will illustrate this.

A minister of Christ was walking out in the woods one evening, engaged in meditation and prayer. He had not gone far till he heard the sound of a man's voice raised, as if in the act of addressing a crowd. As he came nearer he not only saw quite an assemblage of persons, but heard a young man addressing them in words that filled him with horror. The speaker denied the being of a God, ridiculed the Sacred Scriptures, and poured out the most dreadful blasphemies. When the infidel orator closed his remarks an old man arose and asked permission to say a few words. He remarked that several days before he saw a young man in a small boat on the river, a little above a dangerous rapid. He saw that the youth was unacquainted with the river, and with the management of a boat, and he called aloud to warn him of his danger, but it was too late—the boat was fast gliding in the fatal rapid! The young man then, he said, became alarmed, dropped his oars, fell upon his knees, and began to call upon God for mercy. He confessed that he

had been an infidel, and had boldly blasphemed the name of God, and he promised that if his life were spared he would live in a different manner. Said the old man: "Being for many years acquainted with the river, at the risk of my own life I went into the water and saved that youth's life. And now I have nothing more to say, than that that young man is the same whose horrid blasphemies you have this evening been listening to!"

When the old man sat down there was a pause for a moment, astonishment and consternation sitting on the faces of the crowd. Then the orator arose and slunk away in the darkness, when the audience instantly dispersed, as if a bombshell had exploded in their midst.

Ah, yes! it is easy to bluster and utter big swelling words against God and his truth when death seems far away, and when there appears no danger; but when the grasp of death is upon the sinner, and the awful realities of eternity are opening upon him, then even a Voltaire begins to cry for mercy.

Some have raised an objection against the necessity of prayer, on the ground that God already knows all they really need, and that it is therefore absurd to undertake to tell him what he already knows. But our blessed Saviour, so far from regarding the omniscience of God as a reason why we should not pray, regards it as the strongest encouragement to pray. "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do; for your Father *knoweth* what things ye have need of before ye ask him." Thus Jesus, when urging the duty of prayer, and teaching his disciples how to pray, uses the fact that God knows all about us and our wants as a strong reason and encouragement to pray. If we think spiritual blessings worth having, we will think them worth asking. If we are not in a state of mind to ask such blessings from God earnestly, we are not in a state to receive them with profit to our souls and with glory to God; and therefore he says, "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do them for them." We are apt to forget God, to ignore his providence, to sink into a state of practical atheism; and therefore God says that the great rule upon which he acts

in bestowing his gifts is, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find."

Some also have spoken of prayer as producing no effect in the way of securing direct blessings from God, but only as exerting a reflex influence upon the mind of the man who prays. This is a most dangerous and pernicious error. It tends to make men content if they can only secure good feelings and pleasant emotions in prayer, instead of looking in faith for direct blessings from God, and feeling deeply distressed if they do not obtain them. The word of God every where declares that God does give the very things asked, when asked according to his will. Take, for example, one passage—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James 5 : 17, 18.) Here the effect of prayer was not merely upon the mind of the suppliant himself, but in answer to his prayer certain things were done that would not have been done had he not prayed. And the inspired penman is careful to tell us that Elijah's success in prayer was not an exceptional case—did not arise from the fact that he was a prophet or a highly favored person, but tells us he was a man of like passions with ourselves. The Bible every where teaches us that we may get direct blessings from God by prayer. Take the following, which I lately met with, as an illustration of direct answers to prayer :

"A Christian man, who lived in one of our large cities, was in the habit of going to one of the suburbs, for the purpose of preaching Christ. He had gone for a considerable length of time. The meeting had declined in interest and attendance, until only four or five were accustomed to meet. In the meantime the mind of the preacher had become greatly perplexed on the subject of the answer to prayer. The idea that God did not really act in answer to the petitions of men had been pressed on him, and he felt in great difficulties on the subject,

while his heart was discouraged by the state of his work. He resolved to set apart all the spare time of the week for prayer, and to ask that God might dispel his difficulties by filling the place of meeting with hearers on the next night of meeting. No extra intimation or effort whatever was made. He sought that by prayer which he had been unable to procure by other means. The night of meeting at length arrived. The accustomed hearers came first, and were surprised as, one after another, persons who had not thought of coming previously began to drop in. Soon they came in greater numbers, and when the preacher arrived the house was packed full! The difficulties of his mind vanished, and the work went on."

The Rev. John Kirk, of Edinburgh, says: "I well remember an occasion on which I and two other ministers were engaged in holding a series of meetings in a large town in England. Everything that mind could devise or money effect had been done to secure an attendauce, and especially to increase it, and have real good done, and yet about the middle of the period the attendance and every other indication showed that the work was going backward, and not forward. Our hearts began to sink within us; and feeling strongly, on a particular day, that none but God could turn the tide of affairs, two of us were led to set apart a special season for the presenting of our deepest desires on the subject to God. That very night the attendance was nearly doubled, inquirers came forward for conversation, and the work increased in vigor and success so long as we remained. Both *felt* that God had answered our unworthy cry, and will, I believe, never forget the day.

Yes, God has positively declared that he will directly answer prayer, and that if we ask and receive not, it is because we ask amiss. It becomes, then, a most important question—What is acceptable prayer? In what way can we pray so as to secure the blessings we need?

In answering this question we would observe that no prayer can be acceptable to God that is not presented through Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt upon the mind of an intelligent reader of the Scriptures, that sacrifice has always been neces-

MIRACLE AT NAIN.

sary to an acceptable approach to God, ever since man became a sinner. The principle upon which God has acted is that "without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin;" and if man's sin is not forgiven, how can he make acceptable approaches to a holy God? Abel, when he made his acceptable approach to Jehovah had no doubt before his mind the atonement of Christ. He offered a victim, "the firstling of his flock;" and as its blood flowed forth, his faith looked forward to Calvary and the Lamb of God dying there. The blood-stained altar formed a meeting-place between him and his offended God. The innocent suffering in the room of the guilty, the just suffering in the room of the unjust, is the true idea of the atonement; and this was kept before the mind of all acceptable worshipers from the first, by their daily sacrifices.

Paul brings this out very clearly in Heb. 9: 24, 26: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here we see that all the sacrifices were only types pointing to the great sacrifice of the Son of God. None could approach God acceptably except through the shedding of blood, and none can now offer a single prayer which God can consistently answer except through faith in Christ's atoning work. Doubtless it was because the idea of atonement was not recognized that Cain's offering was rejected. So will every prayer be rejected that is not presented through Christ. If God receives and pardons a guilty sinner, it must be either through his own merits or the merits of Christ, or a mingling of the two. That man cannot be received on the ground of his own merits is evident, for merits he has none. He is altogether sinful—corrupt to the very centre of his being. His sins are piled up like huge mountains between God and him and the curse of the holy law is resting upon him. There can be, there-

fore, no mingling of man's merits with Christ's, for he has none to mingle; and if he had, to attempt to add to the Saviour's would be to insult his "finished work."

Jesus is very emphatic in stating that prayer, to be acceptable, must be offered in his name. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." John 14. These are sweet and precious promises, but their fulfillment is all conditioned upon one thing, that we pray *in the name of Jesus.* Jesus bore the full penalty for guilty men upon the Cross; he bore the curse, and he exhausted the punishment due to their sins. Jehovah accepts of Jesus as the sinner's substitute, and thus a way is opened up by which he can be forgiven for Jesus' sake. The justice of God is satisfied —it does not demand TWO PRICES. Christ was made sin for us, in the sense that he bore the consequences of our sins. Hence, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." They were imputed to Jesus; he suffered for them in his own body on the tree, and therefore the believer is presented without fault before God.

In the light of these remarks we may see why such stress is laid in the Bible upon the necessity of faith in prayer. Jesus clearly teaches the vital importance of faith to acceptable prayer: "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this that is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done: and all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Faith, then, is needful to our being heard in prayer, and the first act of that faith must be a personal faith in Christ's atoning work. All faith that does not begin with this cannot please God. There may be faith in the being of God, in the inspiration of the Scriptures, in the faith-

fulness of the promises; but if there is not at the foundation a saving faith in Christ, it is all no better than the faith of devils. "Thou believest there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." Whenever faith is spoken of as needful to acceptable prayer, and wherever the power of faith in prayer is spoken of, it must be understood that the groundwork of that faith is trust in the atonement of Jesus.

And here my reader may ask me the question—Is it proper to tell an unbeliever to pray? I answer—Undoubtedly it is. It is right to call upon men to do whatever it is their duty to do. We regard it as right to call upon them to believe in the Lord Jesus, and why not to pray, seeing that the one act implies the other? No man can pray aright who has not believed in Jesus, and no man can believe in Jesus but it will at once be said of him, "Behold he prayeth!" It would not be proper to tell an unbeliever to pray, without telling him at the same time the medium through which his prayers can alone be accepted. That would be to run the fearful peril of teaching him to make a Saviour of his prayers, and rest his hopes for eternity upon a falsehood. The prayers of the best man that ever lived cannot form a ground of justification before God, much less the prayer of one who by his unbelief is calling God a liar. When sinners are told to pray, we should at the same time preach to them Jesus. If this is not done, they may rest upon their prayers as something meritorious before God. But where Jesus is clearly presented, it is right to exhort the vilest sinner to pray, and like the publican and the dying thief, in the very act the pardoning love of God will fill his soul through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A sinner, however, might pray most earnestly for years—yea, for his whole life, and yet not be saved, if there is no Christ in his prayers. He is trying to make himself better by his prayers —to be saved as a *saint*, not as a *sinner*—in short, he is trying to be saved in his *own way;* and before such a man can be saved, he must yield to God's plan of saving sinners, or God must make a great exception in his case, and yield to save him on account of his prayers. This God never can do, for there is "none other name given under heaven among men by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus."

Prayer is not to be regarded in the light of a mere duty to be performed, the performance of which in some way recommends us to God. It should rather be regarded as a precious, blood-bought privilege, conferred upon us for Jesus' sake. It is to be feared that many have got to look upon prayer as if it were conferring some favor upon God, rather than an infinite and gracious privilege which God confers upon us. They think of prayer as something that is to please God, instead of regarding it as a wonderful condescension for God to listen to such guilty creatures at all. Suppose a wise and rich man were to give to a poor beggar the privilege of coming to him at any time for the supply of his wants, and for counsel in his difficulties. Suppose that when that poor creature comes with greater frequency and regularity than common, he were to become proud, and to assume airs of superiority, and speak as if he by his frequent petitions were placing his benefactor under great obligations—how utterly absurd all this would look! Still more absurd is the conduct of those who think of merit in their prayers—who hope to please God by the regularity of their devotions. God can only be well pleased with a sinner through the full atonement of his Son; and the privilege of prayer, and all the precious blessings which we obtain through prayer, are ours only as the purchase of his sufferings and death.

We should delight in the exercise of this blessed privilege at all times. There are too many who make prayer their *last resort*. When plunged into a sea of troubles, when their pathway is completely hedged up, when every resource of human wisdom has failed, and they are driven to their wit's ends, then they will come to God. Oh, what a condescending God, that will listen to us at all under such circumstances! Yet he does, and gives us a special promise—"Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify my name." But what dishonor they cast upon God, and what great injury they inflict upon their own souls who only come to God in the dark hours of their extremity! He says, "Acknowledge me in all thy ways, and I will direct thy steps." And thus, in all our affairs, the most minute as well as the greatest, we have the op-

portunity of presenting our requests to God, with the assurance of direction and guidance from infinite Wisdom. Oh, how blind to their own mercies are those who do not avail themselves of such a privilege! To have the divine ear ever open to us, so that we can tell to the Holy One troubles of the heart that we could not communicate to our dearest earthly friend; to have one tender and sympathizing friend to whom we can go by day or by night, and whose hand is as able as it is willing to help us; to be able with each returning day to cast our cares upon the Great Governor of the universe, assured that he will make all things work for our good, and that the future, however dark and misty to us, will be full of his goodness,—all this lays us under such obligations of gratitude and praise that eternity alone can fulfill.

What a blessed example of prayer in all things have we in the Lord Jesus! Everything he said and did was connected with prayer. Before choosing his disciples—when preparing for his transfiguration—at his baptism—before working his notable miracles—at the grave of his friend—when taking farewell of his disciples—in the garden of Gethsemane—and on the Cross, in his last dying moments, he prayed for his murderers. Whole nights, amid the cold dews of the mountains, he devoted to prayer. In all this he is our holy example. He has left us a bright pattern that we should follow his steps. Like him, let us get alone in some secret place, where no eye but God's can behold us, and where, in the holy boldness and familiarity of faith, we can pour out our whole hearts before our heavenly Friend. Jesus says, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who seeth in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." He illustrated this principle by his owu example. He always chose some quiet, retired spot to pour out his prayers on behalf of a guilty world. In public prayer the mind is apt to be distracted by thoughts of the presence of others, and of what they may think of us; but in secret we feel that we have to do with God alone. We feel that the whole soul is laid bare to his inspection, and that there is nothing that we can conceal.

No man can lead the life of a Christian who neglects secret prayer, and the frequency with which he comes before God alone may be taken as a very good indication of the prosperity or declension of his soul's spiritual condition.

We should mark with gratitude of heart the answers to prayer which God gives us. Here we often shamefully fail. We come before God with pressing importunity and present our requests, and when in a remarkable manner God interferes and works out for us a deliverance, we fail to recognize his hand, and often in the unbelief of our hearts feel as if the blessing would have come in the natural course of events. How very wicked and dishonoring to God is all this! To be *loud* in calling upon God in our troubles, and *dumb* when his delivering hand appears, is to act like the ungrateful lepers whom Christ cured—"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" We should be as *loud* in our praise as we are in our supplication. We should make every new answer to prayer an incentive to increased prayerfulness, and a means of strengthening our faith in God for the future.

In all our approaches to the throne of grace let us never forget the Great Intercessor. "If any man sin, he hath an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In his great intercession the gracious Saviour is just continuing in heaven the work he delighted in on earth. From his exalted throne in the heavens he looks down upon some poor, weak, tempted disciple, that Satan is seeking to sift as wheat, like a Lot in Sodom, encompassed with fiery trials, and he prays for him that his faith fail not. He looks upon some doubting disciple, whose mind is oppressed with a constitutional gloom, and in answer to his intercession the Comforter is sent, and he is "made glad according to the years in which he has seen evil." He sees another in the furnace of affliction, tempest tossed, driven by the fierce winds of outward trials, and he intercedes for him that he may come out of his trials refined and purified, and able to sing, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." These prayers of our best Friend cannot fail. The Father hears him always, and those whose case he undertakes may rest assured that their suit shall not fail in the Court of Heaven.

Let me exhort the reader to aim at a constant prayerfulness of spirit—a sweet fellowship of the soul with God. This is the most desirable frame of mind, and thrice happy is the soul that becomes its possessor. On this point the holy and heavenly-minded Howe says: "Continued commerce with God, according to the tenor of that league and covenant struck with Him, how pleasant and delightful it is! To be a friend of God, an associate of the Most High, a domestic, no more a stranger, a foreigner, but of his own household; to live wholly upon the plentiful provisions, and under the happy order and government of his family; to have a heart to seek all from Him and lay out all for him! To be so taken up in seeking his kingdom and righteousness as freely to leave it to Him to add the other things as He sees fit—to take no thought for the morrow—to have a heart framed herein according to divine precept; not to be encumbered or kept in anxious suspense by the thoughts or fears of what may fall out, by which many suffer the same affliction a thousand times over which God would have them suffer but once; a firm repose on the goodness of Providence, and its firm and unerring wisdom; a steady persuasion that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, and what is fittest for us to want, to suffer or enjoy. How delightful a life do these make! and how agreeable to one born of God and heir of all things, as being joint heirs with Christ, and claiming by that large grant that says *all things are yours*, only that in our minority it is better to have a wise Father's allowance than to be our own carvers."

"One hour with Thee, my God! when daylight breaks
Over a world thy guardian care has kept,
When the fresh soul from soothing slumber wakes
To praise the love that watched me while I slept:
When with new strength my blood is bounding free,
That first, best, sweetest hour I'll give to Thee.

"One hour with Thee when busy day begins
Her never-ceasing round of bustling care—
When I must meet with toil, and pain, and sins,
And through them all thy holy Cross must bear:

Oh then to arm me for the strife, to be
Faithful to death, I'll kneel an hour to Thee!

"One hour with Thee when rides the glorious sun
High in mid-heaven, and panting nature feels
Lifeless and overpowered, and man has done
For one short hour with urging life's swift wheels:
In that deep pause my soul from care shall flee,
To make that hour of rest one hour with Thee.

"An hour with Thee when saddened twilight flings
Her soothing charm o'er lawn, and vale, and grove,
When there breathes up from all created things
The sweet enthralling sense of thy deep love;
And when its softening power descends on me,
My swelling heart shall spend one hour with Thee.

"One hour with Thee, my God! when softly night
Climbs the high heaven with solemn step and slow;
When thy sweet stars, unutterably bright,
Are telling forth thy praise to men below:
Oh then, while far from earth my thoughts would flee,
I'll spend in prayer one joyful hour with

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S MOTTO.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1: 21.

Pascal says, "Man is a reed, the frailest in nature, but he is a reed that thinks." It is the glory of man that he can think; it is his curse that he too often thinks wrong. He too often fixes his mind upon some worldly object of ambition, and, concentrating his thoughts upon it, makes its attainment the chief object of his life. As God alone can satisfy the wants of an immortal soul, the result is bitter disappointment, even where the highest success has crowned the worldly man's efforts. Hence, one of this class, who possessed rank, and fortune, and wit, exclaimed: "I am tired of the world, its politics, its pursuits, and its pleasures." And a distinguished lady of fashion, in France, when writing to her niece, said, "Alas! that I cannot give you my experience!—that I could only show you the weariness of soul by which the great are devoured! I have been young and beautiful; I have tasted many pleasures, and have been universally beloved; at a more advanced age I have passed years in the intercourse of talent and wit, and I solemnly protest to you that all conditions leave a frightful void."

But how very different it is when the soul, as is the case of Paul, chooses a noble and worthy object in life, and says, "For me to live is Christ." Such a soul has a steady and perpetual serenity, even in the most trying circumstances. Washington, amid his greatest discouragements, Headly Vicars amid the roar of battle, Havelock, amid the horrid scenes of the Indian rebellion, were all serenely calm and happy, because they could say "For me to live is Christ."

One of the old fathers said, "To seek God is to desire happiness, and to find him is that happiness." At the most trying and troubled time of Luther's life, he said: "Property I have

none, and desire none. Fame and honor, if I have had them, the destroyer has taken that away. One thing only remains—a feeble body, worn down by constant labor; and if they take this away, they may, perhaps, make me poorer by an hour or two of life. It is enough for me that I have my sweet Redeemer and Saviour, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I will sing as long as I live." Oh, how glorious becomes life when devoted to such an aim and filled with such a trust!

Paul had not always such a noble object of life before him. Nothing but the mighty grace of God could have made him adopt such a glorious motto. He had been brought up a self-righteous Pharisee—a bitter bigot. This spirit led him to stand an approving witness of the murder of the holy Stephen and to gaze with unrelenting hate upon his dying sufferings. His persecuting zeal against the followers of Jesus far exceeded that of other persecutors, till his very name became a terror among the churches. Good men regarded him as a fearful pestilence, and no doubt some wondered why God permitted such a wretch to live. But see the mighty power of sovereign grace! No thunderbolt comes from the hand of Omnipotence to destroy this man of blood. Justice does not arrest him and shut him up in hell. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways.

God had given Paul mighty powers of mind—had made him as one has said, "One of the greatest of all the great men that ever the Great God made." And these great powers are to be employed for the propagation of the gospel. The tender voice of Jesus speaks to him: "Why persecutest thou me?" Oh, how that "me" must have touched his heart! "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." No words of bitterness are used, no threats of terrible vengeance; even this cruel and bloody man is addressed by the Saviour in words of melting love. Nor was it in vain. His heart of stone is melted—his whole nature is changed—his whole being transformed into the image of the Saviour he formerly hated. From that time love to Christ became the ruling passion of his nature. When work was to be done for Christ no dangers could intimidate him, no threats could appall him, no

opposition cause him to waver for a moment in his course. Sufferings, the bare recital of which makes our blood run cold, were by him gloried in when endured in the cause of Christ. The rage of earth and hell could not turn him aside for a moment from his great life-work, that of glorifying Christ. "For me to live is Christ."

We may see from this how selfishness may be destroyed in the human soul. It is by faith in Christ. Before this, as a pious author has said, "he lives for self. His estimate of everything is its bearing upon self; the color which he casts over everything is one derived from self. Self is the horizon which limits all his views. He is not like a man looking round on a noble landscape, and forgetting himself in the beauty of the wide expanse; but he is like a man carrying a mirror with him, into which he is continually looking, that he may see and admire himself, so that every object is seen in connection with self, and is admired as it helps to set off self."

Now, to come to Christ is a death-blow to self. Selfishness leads man to wish to be his own Saviour, and proudly to resent any hint of his inability to do it. But the very first thing the Holy Spirit does is to smite down this lofty opinion of himself, to empty him of all dependence on self, to show him that there is nothing in himself but utter vileness. True, this is as yet but a negative work. The man has become convinced that he cannot save himself, but he has not yet learned who *can* save him. His heart is in some measure emptied of false motives, but it is not yet filled with the true motive power of a holy life. But when by faith Jesus is taken as a complete Saviour, the soul is at once filled with a new life—Christ takes the place of self. This new moving power controls the man, as self used to do before. He has now no dependence on self, but all confidence in Christ. "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," is the language of his heart now.

I lately saw an anecdote illustrative of the above truths. A poor negro slave in the West Indies was led, under the preaching of the gospel, to feel himself a lost, undone sinner. He had been a very wicked man, drinking and swearing and giving

full vent to his vile passions; yet the same night in which he was convicted of sin he believed in Jesus, and at once found peace. His master was awakened under the same sermon; but as he had lived outwardly what men regard as a very good moral life, his proud heart rejected the finished work of Christ, and set about trying to save himself. This went on for about a month, and the poor Pharisee was becoming more wretched, when he resolved to have a conversation with the happy negro and the following accordingly took place:

"Sam, you are happy!"

"Yes, massa, I be," he said, with a face beaming with joy.

"Well, Sam," said the master, "I have come here this morning to find out what it is that makes you happy. You know, Sam, you and I first began to think about God the same night, more than a month ago; and you, though you were such a bad fellow before, seemed to find peace at once, while I, who have always been what the world calls a good man, have been going on in darkness and sorrow ever since, and it seems to me I only grow worse. It is a great mystery, Sam, and I don't understand it."

"Oh, massa," said the poor slave, "it ain't no mystery at all to me, 'cause you see dat's de berry reason. Sam was such a bad fellow, and hab on such a dirty ragged blanket, dat when God called him he knew it wasn't fit to go 'fore God in, so he threw it right away, and den God put on him de robe of Christ's righteousness; and den, ob course, when Sam had dat on he couldn't help being glad and full of peace. But massa hab on a real good coat, and he did not like to throw dat away, for he thought if it was fixed up a little it would do to go 'fore God. So when he sees a dirty spot he says, 'Oh, I'll wash dat!' and when he sees a hole he says, 'Oh, I'll patch dat!' and so he goes on, trying to make his old coat do; but it nebber will, for God won't receive massa in dat coat, no matter how much he fix it up. But if massa will only throw dat coat away, and let God put de robe ob Christ's righteousness on him, den massa can go in 'fore God and not be 'fraid, but be happy like poor, bad Sam."

The slave paused, and looked at his master, as if to see the effect of this bold language. A smile broke over the master. "You are right, Sam!" he exclaimed, as he grasped the rough black hand held out to him: "I *have* been trying to fix up my old coat, but, thank God, I am done with it now. I'll have on the robe of Christ's righteousness as well as you, and I see that will bring me peace and joy. God bless you, Sam; you have taught me a precious truth."

The experimental knowledge of Christ, which this simple faith imparts, enables the believer to say, "For me to live is Christ." As the body will die without food, so will the soul die without the knowledge of Jesus. He is the true Bread of Life; for "this is eternal life: to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." To know Jesus as a personal Saviour to me, to love him, to hold personal communion with him every day and hour of my life, to meditate upon his loving words, his holy works, his tender and affectionate ways, his spotless life, and to keep up a personal intercouse with him, as with the dearest friend, this is to have spiritual life, and to have it more abundantly.

When a godly minister was upon his death-bed some of his friends quoted texts to him which spoke of the faithfulness of God, when he remarked, "Texts like these do not so much comfort me as 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Plain doctrinal statements, exhibitiug the heart of God, are more sustaining to me than mere promises. I like to get into contact with the living person." "I feel," says another, "that nothing can do me good but personal contact with the living person of the Lord Jesus. Looking at systems and creeds, doctrines and duties, may be all very well in its own place; but if I am to be a healthy, fruit-bearing Christian, I must look steadily and confidently to the Great High Priest who assumed our nature to bear our sins and win our confidence."

Though it is not our privilege, like the disciples, to walk with Jesus in person—to hear his voice—like Thomas, to thrust our

hand into his side, and look upon the print of the nails in his hands,—yet, by that faith which overleaps the barriers of time and space, we can still walk with Him "whom having not seen, we love." In his presence we can enjoy the sweetest pleasures that earth knows, and possess, as one expresses it, "a little heaven to go to heaven in." We can still pillow the weary, aching head upon his loving bosom, and find in him a very present help in every trouble.

If we adopt the motto, "For me to live is Christ," we shall employ all our powers to glorify Chri t. We are not our own, but are bought with the precious blood of Jesus. It is our solemn duty, as well as our joyful privilege, to consecrate every power which we possess to him. Whether we have got great powers or little has nothing to do with the question. Whatever our powers may be, and whatever our sphere, we must be found glorifying Christ as the great business of our lives. We must ask ourselves the question—How would Jesus act were he in my situation? and his holy example will stimulate us to pray, and act, and work, and live for the glory of God in all things. We will hold forth the word of truth on every proper occasion.

A pious lady, who had been very successful in the conversion of souls, was asked what was the secret of her power, when she replied: "Whenever an individual comes within the circle of my influence, I at once set my heart upon saying and doing what I can to secure his salvation. As soon as a fit opportunity occurs I converse with them, meanwhile so ordering my whole deportment that what I *say* may not be contradicted by what I *do*."

At a revival in a large city no less than twenty persons were converted who said that they had been brought under the sound of the word by the kind solicitations of one sister, and that but for her they would never have attended. One person she solicited ten times before success attended her efforts. But a soul was saved! and oh, what a blessed reward will be that thought through all eternity!

If we live near to Jesus he will give us heavenly wisdom, so

as to speak a word in season. "When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee." Filled with the Spirit of Christ, "you will open your mouth with wisdom, and on your tongue will be the law of kindness." Such persons carry a holy influence about them, and it is impossible to come in contact with them without having the great realities of eternity brought near to us. The secret of the Lord whom they fear is with them, and there is an aptness and an appropriateness in their words that give them power.

A scoffing infidel said to a pious youth, "How great is the God you worship?" "So great," was the reply, "that he fills immensity, and yet so small that he dwells in every heart that is humble and contrite." The infidel stood confounded in the awful presence of the God he had insulted.

John Wesley once saw a man in a fearful rage against one of his fellow-men, and uttering awful threats of vengeance. He asked the angry man to forgive the wrong done him. "Never!" was the furious reply. "When I receive an injury I never forgive it!" "Then," said Mr. Wesley, with great solemnity, "I trust you yourself have never committed a sin!" It was a bolt of truth from the hand of God. The man's sins came rolling up to his remembrance like great surging billows. He stood humbled in the presence of his offended God.

Let us regard it as an infinite honor to be permitted to work for the Saviour. I believe it is John Newton who uses the beautiful figure of God calling three angels near his throne, and directing one of them to sit upon his throne, another to occupy a pulpit, and the third to sweep the streets of London. They would not quarrel about who was to go to the humbler position; they would be content to be where God placed them, and would rejoice to do all that they could for the glory of God.

We come now to consider the second part of the Christian's motto:

"TO DIE IS GAIN."

Death is a physical fact that all feel to be inevitable. The history of our race is that of generation after generation chas-

ing one another to the grave. We lately saw a furious snow-storm sweeping across the angry lake; and as the dark waters swallowed the fast-falling flakes, how like, we thought, to the way in which the grave engulphs the passing generations! As we have seen the fire leaping and crackling over our vast prairies, not sparing a single blade of grass, so death makes a clean sweep over the vast fields of humanity. Death has been called the "King of Terrors," and he has converted our fair earth into a hugh sepulchre, a hideous Golgotha. No skill, no talent, no wealth, no power of position can resist the attacks of this fell destroyer. We must all feel the terrible grasp of this foe upon us soon, and be caught up in his skeleton arms.

Under these circumstances, how can death be gain to any one? To the impenitent sinner it is loss—all loss; but to the believer it becomes all gain. The dark valley of death had for ages been entered by the generations of men, and none had ever returned to tell us what lay beyond its gloomy shadows. But Jesus passed through its mysterious gloom; he trod every inch of the way, and he returns not only to tell us of the world of immortal bliss that lies beyond, but offers himself as a guide through the gloomy vale. The resurrection of Christ was a glorious earnest of our triumph over death, if we are believers in him. All uncertainty is taken away from the mind of Christ's people in regard to the future, and they no longer crouch in trembling dread before the destroyer. They know that death to them will be gain. It is for the infidel and the impenitent to tremble and turn pale when death poises his spear, and in a shiver of dread to ask, "To what unknown world am I drifting?" But the Christian can say with triumph, "The Lord is risen!" and that assures him that to him death is robbed of its power, and he hears his Lord say, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

"He will not be in glory and leave them behind." In his glorified humanity he is in the heavens, and he will not leave those who are dear to him as the apple of his eye, who were the purchase of his own precious blood, to be forever under the power of death. He joined his Godhead to our humanity, and

therefore our dust will be precious in his sight: and while all power is committed to his hands he will not permit the grave to triumph over his people, but will fill their lips with the song of victory—"O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

Oh! the sweet delight of that untroubled calm which the presence of Christ gives to a death-bed! The Christian may be placed amid the most trying circumstances. His death-bed may be a tattered pallet of straw, in some lonely garret, neglected and forsaken by the world; or he may be, like Judson, while tossing upon the great deep, far from loved and loving friends; but he is infinitely more happy than the godless kings and nobles, amid their greatest splendor. "For him to die is gain."

How sweetly these truths supported Paul amid his dying scenes! He is a poor prisoner at Rome, in the hands of cruel and relentless enemies. They have condemned him to die by a violent death, as a public criminal. I see him led out from the gates of the imperial city, the enemies of the gospel which he preached so faithfully scowling upon him with malignant hatred as he passes. He is poor, deserted, alone, so far as the human eye can see, but bands of holy angels hover around him, and the Lord of angels bends upon him a loving, sympathizing eye, and makes ready for him a crown and a throne. He ascends the scaffold, lays his head upon the block, the axe of the executioner descends, and while his head rolls in one direction and his body in another, his immortal soul ascends on high, singing, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!"

And this experience that death is gain is not confined to Paul, or to a few special cases of favored individuals. The language of the New Testament shows that it was the general experience of all believers. "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Through Christ they knew that they had the pardon of sin, and sin is the sting

of death. The sting being gone, they felt that they had nothing to fear—the monster death could do them no harm.

An old minister of the gospel, with a body worn out in the service of his divine Master, was one day seen by his family looking very solemn. His son said, "Father, are you afraid to die?" The answer was, "No, Samuel, I have been prepared for death for thirty years, and will I be afraid now?"

Another minister, after preaching earnestly on the Sabbath, awoke on Monday morning suffering very much with his throat. The difficulty increasing during the day, his medical adviser was sent for, who after examination told him that if he had any matters requiring his attention he must settle them at once, for he could not live more than a few hours. The man of God clasped his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven exclaimed, "Oh, my gracious God! I did not know that I was so near home!"

Yes, this world the Christian regards as not his home. He is here a pilgrim and a stranger; but when death comes he has a *good home* to go to. It is his Father's house—the place prepared for him by his gracious Saviour; and as he thinks of the serene glories of that home, he says, "I had rather depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

See that brave soldier, sick and wounded, and but the remnant of what he was when he went forth at the call of his country. You meet him on the cars, and his dim eye lights up with joyful lustre, as he says, "I am now going home." And as the train nears the place, and sweeping round a curve, reveals to him the old homestead, and he soon feels himself in the warm embrace of father, mother, sister and brother, how does he forget all the sufferings and dangers of the long campaign! We have seen a vessel return from a long voyage. Her passengers and crew, as she nears the harbor, gaze eagerly, as they lean over the bulwarks, upon the anxious crowd that lines the wharf. Each eye earnestly searches for the face of some loved one. At length they reach the shore, and are pressed to warm and loving hearts, and however long and perilous the voyage, all is forgotten in the bliss of this joyous welcome.

SITTING UNDER THE VINE.

So the believer finds his death a gain, for the worst that death can do to him is to take him home. Oh, what a good home it is! A building of God!—the home of Jesus and the holy and choice spirits of the universe!—to be forever with the Lord, and with those of whom the world was not worthy! When the struggles of earth are all over, when the conflict with sin and corruption has come to an end, then to enter that home where all that is pure becomes forever permanent, and to join that faultless congregation of sinless ones, fires the soul with the glorious prospect. The description of heaven given in the Bible is a gathering up of the most splendid figures, to convey to us some faint conception of the city of God: its foundation garnished with precious stones, its walls jasper, its streets gold, its gates pearls, its watchmen angels; the throne of God and the Lamb in the midst of it, from beneath which issues the river of life, with the tree of life growing on its banks. There no tempests rage, no cold benumbs nor heat scorches. The iron rod of oppression is broken—the last shout of battle has expired—destruction has forever come to an end; and there, amid the raptures of the heavenly song—amid the noontide blaze of the divine perfections, the thrice-happy soul will praise God while being lasts and immortality endures. There, best of all, there shall be no sin. The knowledge of God fills the minds of the redeemed, his love fills their hearts, and they are "like him, for they see him as he is."

In the triumphant death of the Christian we see the exceeding value of Christ's atoning work. It is the Great Peacemaker, the Prince of Life, and the compassionate High Priest that gives us victory over the last enemy. In the believer's dying experience we see the blessedness of Christ's work set forth—not in creeds, not in theories, not in books or sermons, but in soul-thrilling facts. The believer's calmness and peace amid the sufferings and partings of his closing scenes, his last song of joy, his beaming countenance, his fearless look into that eternity on the verge of which he stands, his firm tread as he enters the dark valley, his parting counsels and his last prayer, all make a deep and powerful impression upon the thoughtful mind

as to the unspeakable importance of a personal interest in Christ. Such death-beds are a practical proof of the reality of religion. They rebuke the infidel and the gainsayer, and say to all, "Prepare to meet thy God!"

We should learn in the light of this subject to curb our sorrow for the death of loved friends who have died in Jesus. It is true that to mourn for these loved ones is not sinful. When those who have been for many years the joy and solace of our lives are taken away, it may be like the savage or the Stoic to remain unmoved, but not like the Christian. God intends that he should feel the stroke deeply. "For us they sicken and for us they die." The weeping Jesus at the grave of his friend tells us it is not wrong to mourn. When the good are taken away earth is left poorer, and we cry, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth!" When the holy Stephen was taken we are told that "devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him."

But there is a great difference between *mourning* and *murmuring*. We have seen some professing Christians exhibit under such trials "the sorrow of the world, that worketh death." They conducted themselves like the worldling who has no hope. All holy recognition of God's loving hand, all gentle submission to his will, all gratitude for the many mercies left, all patient waiting upon Sovereign Love, was lost sight of in a tempest of selfish sorrow. Let us think of the great gain which death has brought to our loved ones. Do your eyes fill with tears and your lips quiver as you look down into the gloomy grave? That is natural. But instead of looking down, look up. See the dear one walking by the river of life, gazing upon the glories of God and the Lamb, and drinking of the stream that makes glad the city of God!

If you had the power, would you bring them back to this sorrowful world? Would you take the crown from their heads, and place them again amid the cares and snares of earth? Oh, no! you cannot be so selfish! Rather rejoice in their gain. They cannot come to you, but you can go to them. They are not lost, but gone before.

"Jesus, thy home is mine!
And I, thy Father's child,
And hopes and joys divine;
This world's a weary wild:
I'm going home!

"Home!—Oh, how soft and sweet
It thrills upon the heart!
Home!—where the children meet,
And never, never part:
I'm going home!

"And as the desert wide,
The wilderness I see,
Lord Jesus, I confide
My trembling heart to thee:
I'm going home!

"While severing every tie
That holds me from the goal,
This, *this* can satisfy
The craving of the soul:
I'm going home!

Ah! gently, gently lead
Along the painful way,
Bid every word and deed,
And every look to say:
I'm going home!"

## CHAPTER X.

### CHRIST'S GRACIOUS WORK.

"Behold now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. 6 : 2.

A day of salvation for lost sinners ! There is something musical and delightful in the sound of the very word, *Salvation!* In a world which sin has made a great "Bridge of Sighs," and where sounds of suffering roll up and around us, it is delightful to listen to Heaven's declaration of deliverance, both present and future—from the condemnation and the power of sin now and from the consequences of sin hereafter. The simple announcement of such a salvation from God should turn the sighs and complaints of earth unto songs of joy and gratitude. It should banish from among men all murmuring against God and his government, all unbelief and distrust of his love, all clinging of the heart's affections to vile and perishable objects, and transform our sinful, rebellious race into a holy, loving, obedient family of "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." Indeed, whenever it is honestly received this is its blessed effect. It changes the aspect of society wherever it finds a lodgement, transforming and renewing the basest of human beings, leveling in the dust the dungeon of oppression, breaking the iron rule of tyranny, and raising the degraded sons of lust to the dignity of "sons of God."

Let us draw the reader's attention to a few of the chief characteristics of this salvation. It is a *free salvation.* It is without money and without price. It is favor shown freely to the undeserving. It comes to the worst sinner in the world—*salvation.* It is God's unspeakable gift, which all may receive, but upon which none had any claim ; and yet it is a strange feature of our depravity that this very freeness is the *chief reason* why men reject it. The great controversy of the world with God

has been to do something to merit eternal life. The great prominent feature of all false religions is, that they all bring a price in their hands, with which to buy salvation. The great cause of the darkness of mind, the anguish of spirit, the sleepless nights and miserable days of many honest inquirers after salvation, is that they are not willing to take it for nothing!

I lately met with a conversation which took place between a minister of the gospel and a sick lady who was anxious about the state of her soul, that will illustrate this point:

*Minister.*—"You say, Mrs. A——, that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

*Mrs. A.*—"Yes, sir; I believe every word that is said about him in the Old and New Testaments."

*Minister.*—"But I rather think you do not believe all that is there said about Christ."

*Mrs. A.*—"And why do you think so, sir? Why have you such a suspicion?"

*Minister.*—"Because if you truly believed in Jesus Christ, and in every word that is said about him in the Scriptures, the result would be salvation, pardon, and peace with God. But it is quite the contrary of this with you: you are awfully afraid of God!—an evidence that you are not looking at God in the face of Jesus Christ; you are mourning, repenting, and bitterly lamenting sin, and earnestly crying for mercy, and yet you say you have no evidence of being heard—that your prayers, like stones thrown into the air, only fall back upon you with terror! Are you not trying to make yourself good and fit to meet God by your own repentance, instead of throwing yourself, just as you are, upon Christ? And this is the reason why conscience upbraids you; for, indeed, you are only increasing your guilt, instead of taking it away. You are not truly believing and trusting in Jesus."

*Mrs. A.*—"Oh, sir, I tell you again that I firmly believe in Christ, the Son of God, and that no poor sinner can be saved without him; and I am striving and praying daily and hourly that he may save me."

*Minister.*—"Well, Mrs. A.——, you are praying and striving

daily and hourly that he may save you; but are you willing to be saved without your praying and striving? Are you willing to be saved on his own terms—simply by faith in his blood? You must 'believe and be saved,' and *then* pray and strive because you *are* saved."

*Mrs. A.*—"But, Oh! how can such a wicked wretch as I am be saved without fervent prayer and striving to repent before God?"

*Minister.*—"Your fervent prayers and struggling will never save you. Jesus only can do this; for it is written, 'He hath *by himself* purged away our sins.' Now, Mrs. A——, I want you to think most seriously on what I have just said. You said you believed truly in Jesus Christ, and in every word that is said about him in the Old and New Testaments. Then you must believe that Christ can save unto the uttermost all who come unto him, even the chief of sinners, and that faith in his blood saves the soul."

*Mrs. A.*—"Yes, I do."

*Minister.*—"And you believe in the Saviour's blood?"

*Mrs. A.*—"Certainly I do."

*Minister.*—"Then you believe it can save you?"

Here was a pause. At last the answer came slowly:

*Mrs. A.*—"Yes, I do."

*Minister.*—"Then your faith has saved you,—has it not?"

Another long pause. Finally she put the inquiry:

*Mrs. A*—"And is that salvation in a Saviour's blood?"

*Minister.*—"Certainly it is, if you truly believe as you say."

And here came another most solemn pause. At length, lifting her eyes and hands towards heaven, her bosom heaving with deep emotion, and her eyes filled with tears, she exclaimed:

"Oh, now I see it! Blessed be God! Now I see that I can be *saved for nothing!* I believed, but never till now did I so see the completeness of that satisfaction which Christ has made for my sin—that I have nothing to do for my salvation but to believe! Oh, sir, let me say to you that this moment a burden has rolled from my soul! Blessed Jesus! And is this salvation in thy blood? How blind I have been these many years,

to imagine that I would have to pray so fervently, repent so bitterly, and keep myself so pure from sin! And how blind those have been who taught me that I would have to do these things before God would accept me! Now I see that simple faith in that atoning blood can save any sinner, and save fully and freely—that it can save me! Oh! then I am saved!—SAVED FOR NOTHING! Glory! glory to God for this!"

Shortly after she was called to pass through the valley and the shadow of death, and among her last words to her husband were, "I have found my Saviour, and am now going home to heaven—SAVED FOR NOTHING!"

It is this attempting to do something to save ourselves—to do something to add to Christ's work, as if it were not complete, that is proving the utter ruin of so many souls.

"'Tis finished all! Ah, yes, indeed!
*All* finished—every jot!
Poor sinner, this is all you need:
Now tell me, is it not?
Come, weary, working, burdened one,—
Yea, come!—why toil you so?
Oh, cease *your* doing!—all was done
By Christ, long, long ago.

"Until to Jesus' work you cling,
Just by a simple faith,
*Your* doing is a deadly thing—
Your 'doing' ends in death!
Then cast your deadly doing down;
Yes, down at Jesus' feet,
And stand IN HIM, in *Him* alone—
All gloriously COMPLETE."

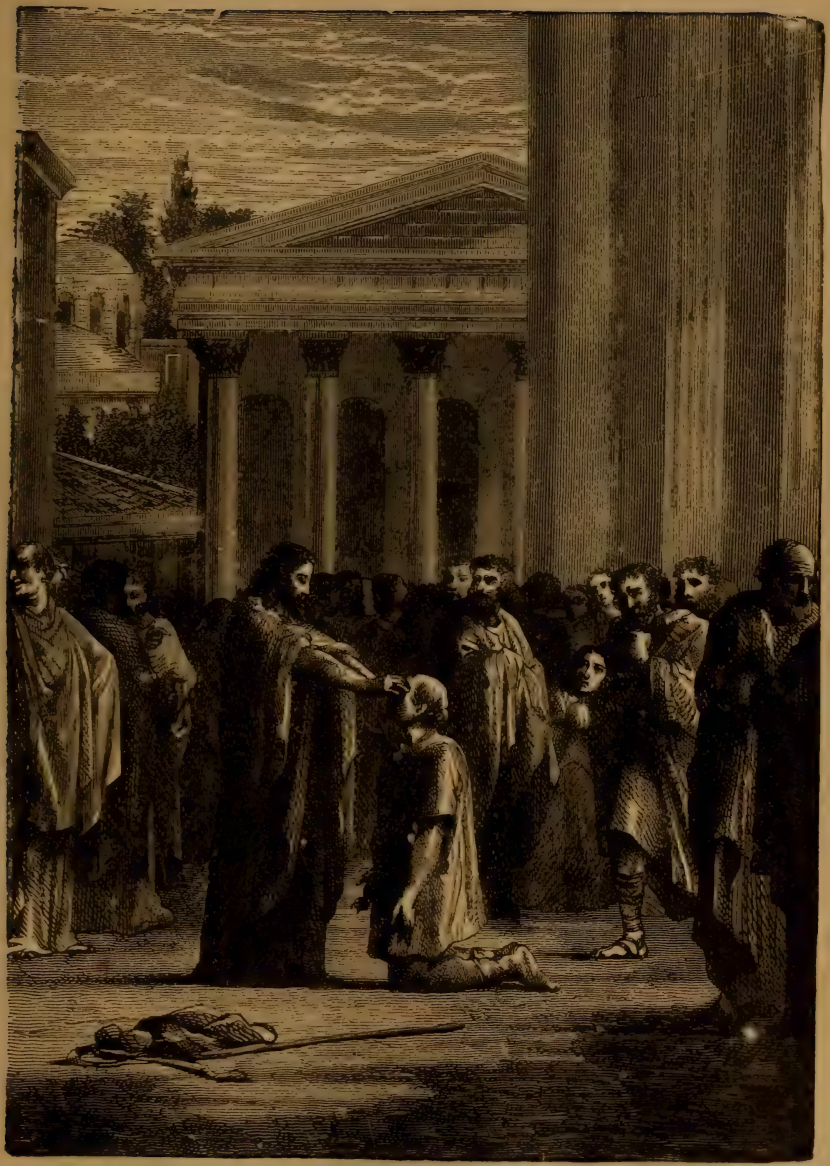
It is a *present salvation.* To the soul that trusts in Jesus its language is, "I *have* blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions." "Thy sins, which are many, *are* all forgiven." The curse of condemnation is at once lifted from the soul, the dark cloud of wrath rolls away, and the clear sunshine of God's love and favor beams upon the soul. Whether the believing soul looks upward to the pure and holy heaven, or down to hell—

whether it looks back upon its sin-stained life, or looks forward into the future, it is able to say, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died."

It is not a salvation from a future hell only, but from the power and condemnation of sin now. If sin were still left upon the conscience, if the wild and turbulent passions of the soul remained in full force, mere deliverance from future punishment would leave man as miserable as ever. He would carry a hell within him; and unless he could find a salvation from the sin within him, no outward exemption from punishment could ever make him happy. He might be taken to heaven's brightest scenes of glorious splendor, and amid the gushing songs of seraphic gladness he would stand with all the elements of a hell burning within his guilty soul. But Christ's salvation delivers from the love of sin, and at once plants a new principle of life in the soul. It fits men for *going to God*, and for being forever *with God*, by making them *God-like*. It purifies while it pardons.

This salvation, then, is wonderfully adapted to our wants as lost sinners. For our guilt it brings pardon, for our guilty dread of God it brings reconciliation, for our love of sin the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, for our pollution a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and for our restless misery the peace of God and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. There cannot be sin so deep and damning but the blood of Christ can wash it out. Oh, what a glorious passage is this: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" This is the very salvation we need, and such as none but a God of infinite love and wisdom could have devised.

An old writer says: "If nature had been to contrive the way of salvation, it would rather have put it into the hands of saints and angels, to sell it, than into the hands of Christ, who gives it freely, whom therefore it suspects. Nature would set up a way to purchase, by doing; therefore it abominates the merits of Christ, as the most destructive thing to it. Nature would do any thing to be saved rather than go to Christ, or close with Christ and owe all to him. Christ will have nothing, but the



JESUS HEALING THE BLIND.

soul would thrust somewhat of its own upon Christ. Here is the great controversy."

The adaptation of the gospel as a present salvation to perishing men, is illustrated in a letter from one of our chaplains in the army. He says: "A hero of many battles, as he lay on a stretcher, most earnestly begged for salvation. I inquired what he prayed for. 'What is it?' he said in reply: 'It is something for eternity. I am unprepared?—going all unprepared! Oh, beg for a new heart! I want it now—do not wait; I want it at once!'" Others have told us that all over the bloody battle-field can be head the cry of men, as they go into eternity, pleading for a present salvation. As their life's blood is gurgling from their veins, as they take their last look of the world, they feel that what they specially require is a present salvation; and, blessed be God! the gospel of Christ meets that very want. Thus it meets the wants of sinners all over the world.

A Hindoo on the coast of Malabar, after going through a course of the most dreadful self-inflicted tortures, in order to find peace for his troubled soul, heard one of our missionaries preach from the text, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." The poor heathen listened with intense interest, and when the sweet gospel idea broke upon his darkened mind, he cast from him his instruments of self-torture, and joyfully exclaimed, "This is what I want! This is the thing for me!"

Our blessed Saviour, in the last moments of his agony upon the Cross, gave the world a striking evidence of a present salvation in the conversion of the poor guilty sinner who hung upon the cross beside him. That lost outcast from among men was in his last moments, his eyes growing dim in death, his period of probation about to end forever, when Jesus stretched out to him the hand of salvation. When he was first suspended upon the cross, like his companion in crime, his heart was full of enmity against Jesus, and his mouth full of blasphemies. He presented the awful spectacle, so often seen, of a soul on the very brink of eternity, and yet despising the only way of deliverance. To such fearful depths of guilt will Satan lead his victims that they sport on the very brink of hell!

But under Christ's instructions a sudden change takes place. The bold blasphemer begins to pray. The mocker begins to speak out for Jesus. He takes his vile, sin-polluted soul, and puts it into safe keeping, even into the Saviour's hands. He hastens to the City of Refuge before the gates are shut against him forever. He flies to the Ark of Safety while the hand of mercy is there to take him in. He cries, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" As if he had said, "Lord, remember that poor sinner who hung by thy side—who at first despised thee, mocked and reviled thee, but at last believed in thee, and found shelter in thy bleeding love."

How promptly Jesus responded with his present salvation to that prayer of faith! He does not impute his transgressions to him—he does not reproach him for his long life of infamy; but in the depth of his tender love he receives the lost one to his heart and his home. How like was this to the Friend of Sinners!—to Him who does not "quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed," and who says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." This was, indeed, compassion worthy of "Him who is mighty to save." He was not saved by his good works, for he had none. All his life had been marked only by bad works. If his salvation had depended on his doing something meritorious, he was forever lost. But without good works—just as he was, in all his vileness—Jesus took him into his favor, and cleansed him in his blood.

This salvation, however, with all its precious blessings, may soon, my dear reader, be beyond your reach. God says, "*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." Oh, how much is suspended upon that little word, *Now!* It is a small, microscopic point on which our eternal interests revolve. The past is gone—we can not recall it; the future is not ours. The point of time represented by the word *now* is that with which we have alone to do; and it is there that God meets us with this great salvation in his hand, and asks us to accept it. I do not so much fear that many of my readers will cast down this book, saying, "I will have nothing to do with this salvation;—I will never come to Christ!"—no, the very awfulness of such

a declaration would startle and alarm them; but the great danger is that they will acknowledge the truth of it all, confess the claims of this salvation upon them, and resolve that *some time* they will attend to the matter. Alas! how many are sealing their damnation in this way every day!

> "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow!
> Creeps in this petty place from day to day,
> To the last syllable of recorded time;
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusky death!"

Permit me to present some reasons why you should now, without another moment's delay, come to Christ.

*You can gain nothing by delay.* Some of my readers have been delaying this matter for ten, twenty, it may be fifty years, and all you have gained is increased hardness of heart. You are less inclined to attend to spiritual things now than at any former period of your life. The whole matter of attending to the salvation of your soul appears to you at this moment encompassed with more difficulties than it ever did before; and so it will be year after year, till by your own hands you will have piled up mountain barriers between you and salvation, which you can never climb over. You can remember a time when the powers of the world to come took hold of you. The faithful warnings of the pulpit sounded solemn in your ears as the thunders of the last day. You felt tender under the story of Christ's love. The providences of God, in the removal of friends into the spirit world, deeply affected you, and made you wish to be prepared to die. You took up the Bible as God's letter to you, and read from its pages the warning voice from heaven. Friends prayed for you, ministers cherished high hopes concerning you, and Christians said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

But you delayed to come to Christ, and now that years have passed away, what have you gained by the delay? A seared conscience—a hard heart—an apathy to God's rebukes which is the herald of eternal death. You can now sit calm and indifferent under sermons that at one time would have made you

tremble; and as in nature a deceitful calm often precedes the wildest tempest, so your calm, if not broken, will precede the tempest of divine wrath that is to burst upon your soul. This hardening process is continually going on, and every day's delay increases the probability that you will never be saved at all.

You will never be *more able* to come to Christ by delay. You have all the powers now that you ever will have;—an understanding to hear God speak, a conscience to feel his mighty claims upon you, the Holy Spirit to convince you of sin, the Bible to present you with the simple plan of salvation. We have already shown that delay can never make you *more willing* to come to Christ. You may delude yourself with the idea that the circumstances with which you are now surrounded are unfavorable, and that by delay you may obtain improvement in this respect; but this is a deception of the father of lies. Satan's great object is to persuade you that the time has never quite come—that you are not yet quite ready to attend to the affairs of your soul; and if you thus listen to his counsel, you *never will* be ready. He will always have a *to-morrow* with which to beguile you on to eternal death.

There can never be *more powerful motives* urged upon you than you have now. You are now pressed and urged by the most powerful motives to come to Christ—motives drawn from heaven, earth and hell. These motives will not become stronger by delay. Heaven is as glorious, hell as awful, death and eternity as solemn, the promises of God as precious, and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ as tender and melting as they ever will be. If these great realities do not affect you now, what reason have you to expect that they ever will affect you? While you have been delaying, thousands have been saved under the very means you have been rejecting. You, too, might have been saved, but Jesus says "ye would not." And can you expect that God will institute a new system of means to overcome your obstinacy, and to melt that heart which by the abuse of the old means you have hardened? Ah, no! He has instituted means and motives admirably adapted to our nature,

and those who will not yield to them must perish. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Nothing can be gained by delay, but *everything may be lost.* By delay you are losing the present happiness which the gospel of Christ imparts. The sinner has generally the conception in his mind that the service of Christ is one of gloom, and that to become a Christian is to lose all the pleasures of the present in faith of enjoying the blessedness of the future. But where has he obtained this idea? Not from the Bible, for it speaks of "the peace that passeth all understanding," "the joy unspeakable and full of glory," as connected with the Christian life. Neither has he obtained this idea from true Christians, for they all bear emphatic testimony to the blessedness of the good hope through Christ. The idea has been propagated by men who know nothing personally or experimentally about religion themselves, and whose statements concerning it are therefore worthy of no more attention than would be the remarks of a blind man on the subject of colors, or of a deaf man on the harmony of sounds.

The many years that you have delayed coming to Christ have been years in which you have sacrificed your own true happiness. Your heart has been restless as the troubled sea, when all this time it might have been filled with the peace of God. You have been filled with dark and guilty forebodings of the future, when you might have been contemplating "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." You have been buffeting with the winds and waves of trouble in your own unaided strength, when you might have had His aid who comes walking to the believer across the stormy sea of difficulty, and says to the raging billows, "Peace, be still!" In short, you have been stumbling upon the mountains of sin, and, through the crooked ways that lead to death, when you might have been led by the Good Shepherd into "the ways of pleasantness and paths of peace," and by "green pastures and still waters." By delay you have lost years of true happiness.

By delay you have lost years of *true usefulness*. It is wonderful what an amount of good one truly converted person, filled and fired with the love of Christ, can do in a few years. Let him be truly consecrated to the work, filled with a holy zeal, and directed by a single aim to glorify God, and though possessed of the most moderate talents and common advantages he cannot fail to be very useful. In the conversion of souls, in the comforting of saints, in the promotion of all the best interests of humanity, he will be honored in performing works of imperishable glory. Now we will suppose that a companion of yours ten years ago gave his heart to Christ, while you deferred it to a more convenient season. From that time he has been engaged in works of faith and labors of love. Many an eye of sorrow he has dried; many a heart of sadness he has cheered. There are souls now safe in glory that he was the honored means of bringing to Christ. In the meantime, during all these years you have been utterly useless, a cumberer of the ground, and a burden on God's fair earth. Nay, not only have you all that time been useless, but pernicious. It is impossible to be negative and neutral in the world. The Saviour says, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." So you have been active in accumulating sin upon your soul, and by your example have been leading souls to hell. Oh, what a contrast between these ten years of that active Christian and yours!—he laying up treasure in heaven, you treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Oh, think of that impression—a soul rich in wrath! He going about all these years under the smile and favor of Christ; you going out and coming in, rising up and lying down, under condemnation. He making the world happier and better for him every day that he lives; you pursuing a course which, if your dearest friends follow it, will lead them to eternal woe. And yet you might have been saved at the same time that your companion was. You read the same Bible, heard the same gospel, were impressed by the same preaching, were prayed for by the same Christians, and convicted of sin by the same Holy Spirit; but you lingered, and delayed, and trifled. Oh, look at those

lost, blighted, blasted years, and thank God that you are not in the world of despair! Start from your dream of false security, and let the time past of your life suffice for you to have trifled with your soul's interests.

Do I need to remind you that by longer delay you may lose your all—*your soul?* To one in health, and who is but seldom brought into contact with scenes of sudden death, it may sound very trite and common-place to say that life is short and uncertain; but if called to see the young and vigorous cut down by death as often as the minister of the gospel is, you would then feel "what shadows men are, and what shadows they pursue." In the course of my ministry I have seen many striking illustrations of the solemn text, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." I remember a young man in the prime of his days, and in all the strength and vigor of his manhood, standing up before me to record his vows to his young bride, and in two hours more I was called to kneel at his dying bed, and offer up the last prayer for his departing spirit. Death does not always send a notice of his approach, but, like a thief in the night, he comes to the young and the old alike. He never asks whether they are prepared or not, or whether they are willing to go or not. Ah! how often have we seen him drag the unwilling, the affrighted and the shrinking spirit away before it was ready to go! "I did not think I would die so soon!" is their startled cry.

A minister of Christ talked to a young man about attending to the concerns of his soul now, when he was met by the usual excuse, that his business affairs were very pressing at present, but that at a more convenient time he would attend to the matter. The minister spoke of the uncertainty of life, and the possibility that he might die before that convenient time arrived. "I will run the risk of that!" was the light reply. The minister went to perform some official duty, and in about two hours, when returning by the same road, he met a number of men carrying a mangled and bleeding body, and upon looking on the face of the dead, he saw it was the same young man with whom he had been conversing in the morning. Shortly after

he had uttered the fearful words, "I will run the risk!" he went into the woods to chop, and the first tree he felled came down upon him and crushed out his young life. Alas! how many are thus risking their eternal all every day upon the breath that is in their nostrils! Sinner, you may make up your mind to disobey God for another week, month, or year; but that time you will never have unless God bestows it upon you: and can you expect God to give you a prolongation of the life which you have beforehand deliberately planned to employ against him? God bestows upon us our time, as well as every other good and perfect gift; but how great the wickedness of saying, "If God gives me another week or month I will employ it in rejecting his salvation and trampling upon his law!" Yet this, though not the language of your lips, is that of your conduct!

Take care, my dear reader, that while you are hesitating and doubting as to whether you will accept Christ or not, God does not decide the matter for you, by suddenly ending your life and shutting your soul up in hell. *You* may linger, but "your judgment lingereth not;" *you* may slumber, but "your damnation slumbereth not." God will not be mocked. The storm of the righteous displeasure will soon burst upon you with a terrible destruction. You do not expect to be lost. The gayest, the most trifling, the most hardened among you do not expect to be lost. Though traveling fast in the broad road, with your face set towards perdition, you do not intend to be lost. There is still some "to-morrow" set before you that you hope will find you a Christian. But when the habit of delaying is formed, as it is in your case, the peril is extreme. Oh, start from your lethargy this moment, or you *may* be lost!

Delaying sinners often look forward to a death-bed as a time when they will have opportunity enough to prepare for eternity. I have seen enough of death-beds to know that this is a delusion of the wicked one. Apart from the consideration that death often comes suddenly upon its victim, and without a moment's warning ushers the soul into the presence of God, a death-bed is not a fit place for settling the great concerns of the soul. Sometimes, when death is not sudden, reason is gone,

and the victim lies in unconsciousness, or in muttering delirium. But even where this is not the case there is pain, depression, an overwhelming languor produced by sickness, that often unfits the mind for anything requiring concentration and clearness of thought. The mind so closely sympathizes with the body that a strange lassitude—a stupid, dull indifference to everything comes over those who feel themselves nearing eternity, and yet know that they are not prepared to die. I have often been astonished at this, and still more astonished to find their friends calling that very indifference resignation, and proof of a willingness to die!

Sometimes the sick man, conscious that he is not in a state to give proper attention to his soul's salvation, begins to plead for restoration to health, and to promise that if his life is spared he will live differently. In health waiting for sickness, and in sickness waiting for health! Oh, poor, deluded sinner! will you not see the folly of this course—believe that God's time is the best, and that time is *now?*

I cannot close this chapter better than by the following conversation which the Rev. Dr. Spencer had with an awakened sinner:

A young man entered my studio, saying, "I am convinced I have neglected religion long *enough*, and I am determined to put it off no longer."

"That is a good determination," said I. "'Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'"

"Well, I don't know that that text is for me, because"——

"Yes, it *is* for you," said I, interrupting him.

"I was going to say, sir, I don't suppose I have got so far as that yet, so that salvation is for me *now*."

"You *told* me that you were determined to put off religion no longer, and therefore I say, 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.'"

"But I don't wish to be in a hurry, sir."

"You *ought* to be in haste! David was. He says, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.' 'God now

commandeth all men, every where, to repent,' and you are one of them; and if you are like David, you will make haste and delay not to keep God's commandments."

"I don't suppose I am in such a state of mind as to be prepared to become a Christian *now*."

"Will disobeying God put you in a *better* state of mind, do you think?"

"Why, I don't know; but I have not much deep conviction. I know that I am a sinner against God, and I wish to turn to him and live a different life."

"Then turn to him. Now is the accepted time."

"But I find my heart is full of sin. I am all wrong. I feel an opposition to God such as I never felt before."

"Then repent, and turn to God instantly, while it is called to-day."

"But I don't suppose I can be ready to come to religion so *quick*."

"You said you were determined to put it off no longer, and I told you now is the accepted time."

"But I never began to think seriously about my religion till last Sunday."

"And so you want to put it off a little longer."

"Why, I want to get *ready*."

"And are you getting ready? You have tried for a week."

"No, sir," said he, in a sad manner; "I don't think I am any nearer to it than I was at first."

"I don't think you are; and I suppose the reason is, you don't believe now is the accepted time."

"Oh yes, I do, for the Bible says so."

"Then, don't wait for any other time. Repent *now*. Flee to Christ *now*, in the accepted time."

"I have not conviction enough yet."

"Then it cannot be the accepted time yet."

"But I have not faith enough."

"Then it cannot be the accepted time."

"Well, sir, I—I—I am not ready *now*."

"Then it cannot be the accepted time *now*"

"But it seems to me it is too quick," said he, earnestly.

"Then it cannot be 'the accepted time,' and the Bible has made a mistake."

"But, sir, my heart is not *prepared*."

"Then it is not the accepted time."

With much embarrassment in his manner he replied, "What shall I do?"

"Repent and turn to God, with faith in Christ to save you as a lost, unworthy sinner, *now* in the accepted time."

He appeared to be in a great strait. He sat in silence, with very manifest uneasiness, for a few moments, and then asked: "Is it possible that any one should repent and turn to God *so soon*, when I began to think about it only last Sunday?"

"Now is the accepted time!" said I.

Again he sat in thoughtful silence, and after a time he asked me: "Is salvation offered to sinners *now?*"

"Yes, *now*. 'Now is the day of salvation.'"

"But it seems to me I am not *prepared* now to give up the world."

"And that very thing is your difficulty. *You* are not prepared, but '*now* is the accepted time.' You wish to put off your repentance and conversion to Christ till some *other* time, but '*now* is the accepted time.' You and your Bible disagree; and if nothing else kept you from salvation, this would be enough. I beseech you, my dear friend, delay no longer. *Now* is God's time. You told me you were determined to put off religion no longer. I suspected you did not know your own heart, and therefore said to you, '*Now* is the accepted time.' And now it has become manifest that all the while you meant to put off religion till some other time."

"It seems hard to shut up a man just to the present time," said he, in an imploring accent.

"If you were a dying man, and had only an hour to live, you would not say so; you would be glad to have the Bible say to you, '*Now* is the accepted time,' instead of telling you that you needed a month or a week to flee to Christ. It is *mercy* in God

to say to you, 'Behold, *now* is the day of salvation,' when you do not know that you will live till to-morrow morning."

"Will you pray with me?" said he.

I prayed with him, and we separated. The last words I uttered to him as he left the door were, "*Now* is the accepted time."

Just one week afterwards he called upon me, "to give an account of himself," as he said. "I have got out of my trouble,' said he. "Now I trust in Christ, and I am reconciled to God, or at least I think so. I thought you were very hard upon me last Sunday night, when you *hammered* me and *hammered* me with that text—'Now is the accepted time.' But I could not get away from it;—it followed me everywhere. I would think of one thing, and then that would come up—'Now is the accepted time.' Then I would begin to think of something else, and it would come up again—'Now is the accepted time.' So I went on for three days. I tried to *forget* that text, but I *could not*. I said to myself, 'There is something else in the Bible besides that:' but wherever I read, that *would* come to my mind. It annoyed and *tormented* me. At last I began to question myself *why it was* this plagued me so much, and I found it was because I was *not willing to be saved by Christ*. I was trying to do something for myself, and I wanted more time. But it was not done. Everything failed me; and then I thought if 'Now *is* the accepted time,' I may go to Christ now, wicked as I am. So I just prayed for *mercy*, and gave up all to Him."

This was a blessed conclusion of this hard struggle; and what a blessed thing that he fell into the hands of such a wise and faithful instructor! If he had met with one who would have told him to go home and pray, or to read, or to examine himself, he might have lost his soul. The awakened sinner is willing to perform any duty, that he may have the credit of doing something for himself. But on the peril of his soul he must be pressed with one thing alone—*an immediate* surrender of his all to Christ. Our existence is a wreck and a chaos, which his salvation alone can restore. Our souls have within an aching

void—a restless, unsatisfied longing, which this salvation only can fill and satisfy. Accept it now as freely offered, and it will be the joy of your life—your boast in time—your bliss through eternity! It will prove the charm of your youth, the strength of your vigorous years, the glory of your old age, your health in sickness, and your life in death.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BLESSED REMEMBRANCE.

"This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22 : 19.

Memory can be made either an angel to bless and comfort us, or a fiend to curse and torment us, even in the present life : and it will either increase our happiness or our misery through all eternity. There are wrapped up in the souls of some men dark and bitter remembrances. With advancing years they try hard to forget them; but like a blood-hound, true to the scent, these dreadful memories pursue them, go where they may. They would give the world, did they possess it, for some big wave of oblivion to come and wash out from their souls these recollections forever.

There are people with whom we have become acquainted in the past that we can never remember but with loathing and horror. We think of them and of their influence upon ourselves and others with the same feelings with which we remember the horrors of a nightmare. If they still live we shun their presence as we would the plague, and when we learn that they have dropped into the grave we feel as if a walking pestilence had been stayed. But there are others, the remembrance of whom comes over us like a breeze from paradise. We thank God every day of our lives that ever we were brought under their influence ; and though they may have ceased from earth, yet in our memory they still live, and speak for God with a voice that the grave cannot stifle.

How often, at the railroad depot or at the sea-port, have we seen loved friends standing with clasped hands and tearful eyes, as they took their last look of each other, and with quivering lip and faltering voice said, "Remember me ! " And on those tender occasions it is no uncommon thing for little tokens of remembrance to be exchanged, which in after years, whenever

looked upon, may call up in all its freshness the love of that friend. That token of the past may be of no great value in itself, but as the remembrancer of a dear friend, far distant, or perhaps departed from earth, it is to us of untold value. It has linked to it a history full of tender associations, and every time we look upon it we feel their improving influence.

Now, our best friend, the Lord Jesus, before his departure from earth left his church a token of remembrance in the Lord's Supper, and said, "Do this in remembrance of me." And in order to make the occasion more tender still, he has pledged himself to be present in his fullness of grace, to impart untold blessings to those who with the right spirit comply with his farewell request. Oh, believer, can you permit any trifling thing to keep you away on such a happy occasion! If so, it is but too evident that your love has waxed cold.

At a public exhibition of a panorama of the Holy Land, as the picture of Jerusalem was passing before the eyes of the deeply interested audience, a voice suddenly cried out, "Where is Calvary?" The effect of that question, even before that promiscuous assembly, was electrical. A deep solemnity fell upon all, and in the dim light tears could be seen glistening in many eyes. An unconverted person present confessed that at that moment his soul was penetrated with a sense of his guilty ingratitude to the blessed Saviour.

It has been said that that is the most valuable thought which suggests the greatest number of other thoughts. If this be so, how valuable is the remembrance of Jesus. It calls up thoughts innumerable, all teeming with blessings to the soul, and deep enough and rich enough to last us forever! It brings before us *the past*, with all our guilt and ingratitude, and all Christ's love and forbearance. It brings before us *the present*, with all its blessings of pardon, a place among God's people, and a wealth of love shed abroad in our hearts. It brings before us *the future*, with its sinless songs, its home of deathless rapture, and the blessedness of being forever with the Lord and with his people.

When we come to the Lord's Supper, to remember Jesus, we

stand, as it were, upon a vast eminence, look over the whole history of the past, and see it full of love, full of Christ; while from the same sacred height we can look into the future and see a coming Saviour—no longer as a man of sorrows, but as a conquering King; no longer wearing a crown of thorns, but a crown of glory—no longer mocked and despised of men, but every knee bowing before him, and every tongue confessing him Lord of All. Hence he tells us to meet and remember him "till I come;" and fired by the joyful thought of his coming, the church shouts out its eager longings—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

And those who come to the sacred feast truly to remember Jesus, will be truly remembered by him. We do not like to be forgotten by our friends. A sharp pang of anguish cuts through our hearts when we think we have been ungratefully forgotten by those we love. But what if the whole world were to forget and forsake us, if the Lord Jesus only remembered us! His affection would abundantly make up for the loss of every other. Never talk about being poor, friendless, forsaken as long as you have a warm place in the heart of Him who cannot forget you, since he has engraven your name on the palms of his hands.

The very modest request of the dying thief was to be remembered by Jesus. The request was granted; and oh! how much was implied in the granting of that request! In the answer which he received to that request were secured to him a crown of glory, a home of eternal love, and blessings so vast that we have not power of imagination even to conceive of them. Yes, believer, the Lord remembers you, and makes your interests his. The place of your abode, the perplexities of your earthly lot, the struggles of your soul after a higher spiritual life, and all the big waves of trouble that roll over you, are known to your Elder Brother, and command his deepest sympathy. He is *touched* with a feeling of your infirmities, and at the right time his hand of love will be stretched out for your deliverance.

When Christians come together at the communion table, it should be simply to remember the Lord Jesus,—not merely to remember him among other objects, but *above* all other objects,

THE BETRAYAL.

and to the exclusion of all others. "Lovest thou me more than these?" We do not come there to perform a church ceremony. We do not come to dwell upon our own feelings, emotions and shortcomings, for that would be to remember *ourselves* rather than Jesus. We do not come to think over our past experiences of religion, however good these may have been, for that would be to remember only our *past remembrances* of Jesus. We come not to think of the faults of our brethren, for there every heart should be brimming over with love. We are to meet with Jesus in the midst, upon whom all hearts are to be fixed, as the great centre of love, and he will fill our hearts with his presence, and thrill them with the words "Peace be unto you!"

On the Mount of Transfiguration who was it that formed the great centre of the group that stood there, bathed in the fullness of heaven's glory? Who was it that drew the disciples up from the world below, and Moses and Elias down from the heights above, and thus united the members of the family in heaven and in earth in sweet brotherly converse? It was the Lord Jesus. And what brought the eternal God himself down to that mount, to give audible testimony to the truth? Was it not because his beloved Son was there? So if there is to be union between our souls and God, it must be through Christ. If there is to be a union of love between the members of the church, it must be cemented and rendered eternal by the love of Christ.

Dear reader, whatever you forget, do not forget the blessed Saviour. It might seem at first sight impossible for any one to live in a world for which he has done so much, and yet forget him. With the same sun shining upon us that once shone on him; with the same stars twinkling over our heads that once looked solemnly down on his midnight wrestlings; with the Bible in our hands, the heaven-authenticated record of his labors, and tears, and sufferings for us; with the Spirit ever pleading for him in our hearts, and conscience ever urging his claims; with death approaching, which Jesus only can prevent proving to us the King of Terrors, and with eternity opening its portals to receive us, which he only can make to us a home of bliss,

we should be ready to exclaim, "Is it possible that I can ever forget him!"

But alas! stern experience tells us that we *may* and that we *do* forget him; and in order to prevent it he has instituted outward tokens of his love, that appeal to our very senses, and through them to every power of our souls, saying, "Remember me. Under a consciousness of guilt, remember I died for you. In the furnace of affliction, remember I am with you. When under the sifting power of Satan's temptations, remember I am praying for you. When duties stern and severe are laid upon you, and you are ready to shrink from the cross, remember that for you I endured the Cross and despised the shame." And when death comes to clasp you in his skeleton arms, and when heart and flesh fail, and nature shrinks back in dismay, remember that your Redeemer liveth. Yes, blessed Jesus, while memory holds her place, and reason has the ascendency, we shall remember thee and may thy glorious name fade away from our dying lips only to be taken up in strains more worthy of thee in heaven.

> "Oh, Memory, leave no other name
> But His recorded there!"

The emblems employed in the Lord's Supper are very significant. Indeed it is characteristic of all our Lord's teaching, that he made the external objects around us administer to our spiritual profit. He knew that according to the constitution of our minds that discourse will always be best remembered, and make the deepest impression, which contains the most ideas of which a representation on canvas could be made by the painter. Our Lord's sermons were of this kind. When he would illustrate the comprehensiveness and wide-spread benevolence of his Father, he refers us to the rain and the sunshine. "He maketh his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and his rain to descend upon the just and the unjust." When he would illustrate the minuteness and far-reaching nature of God's providence, he refers us to the fall of the sparrow, and tells us that the hairs of our head are all numbered. When he would teach us to trust

in God, and make us feel our own individualism before him, he says, "Consider the lilies," and "Consider the ravens." Jesus never rejected an illustration of truth because it was common and familiar, but rather accepted that as a recommendation of it. The children playing in the market-place, the hen running with outstretched wing to shelter her brood, the long-lost prodigal returning home, the woman seeking diligently for the lost piece of silver and rejoicing over its recovery, are all specimens of the simple nature of his illustrations; and many a pulpit now "dying of dignity" would have new life and power infused into it if the preacher would but imitate the Great Teacher in this respect. His drowsy hearers, sinking to sleep in their cushioned pews, would rouse up and gaze with delighted wonder to see him lay aside his dry, intellectual abstractions and his elaborately concocted milk and water for the pure, simple gospel, illustrated after the example of Jesus.

The broken bread and the expressed juice of the grape were to represent his broken body and shed blood; but as neither of these nourishing objects can do us any good unless we partake of them for ourselves, so there must be a personal application of Christ to our own souls by faith. This is what our Lord means when he says, "Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you." As to maintain our bodily life we must each eat and drink for ourselves, so to obtain and maintain spiritual life we must have a personal union with Christ. The branch that has life and bears fruit must be *in* the vine. To be *near* the vine would not do; to be even *tied close* against the vine would not do; it must be a part of it to draw the life-giving sap. This is what is meant by living on Christ by faith. Thus, in the Lord's Supper the symbols are simple, and the truths represented by these are simple.

When men of the world have wished to perpetuate their names, it has been by erecting some vast pyramid, some towering pillar of sculptured stones; but Jesus takes, as a memorial of what he has done for us, bread and wine, and through these simple elements enforces great truths, writing the remembrance of his love, "not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart," and causing it to live forever.

Let me now point out something of the spirit in which we should remember the Saviour in this ordinance which he has appointed.

It should be done in a spirit of *child-like confidence* in him. On one occasion our Lord took a little child, and having set him in the centre of the throng, said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." This comes close to the hearts of those who are parents. That lovely child that you take so tenderly in your arms, whose outward beauty of form is but a faint type of the guileless spirit within, in whose presence guilt is awed and sorrow soothed, that comes to your homes as an angel of love, with its freedom from care, from suspicion, from unbelief, your Lord takes as an illustration of the spirit and temper he would have you cherish.

What a lovely sight to see the sturdy understanding and the vigorous, well-cultivated intellect of the man united to a heart that simply believes when God speaks like a little child! When was it that David reached the highest pinnacle of true greatness? It was not when, as a shepherd boy, he slew the bold defyer of Israel, and sent a thrill of joy through the hearts of his countrymen. It was not when he ascended the greatest throne then on earth, amid the joyous acclamations of the people; and it was not when, by a series of brilliant victories, he established that throne in still greater power and glory. No,—David never was so truly great as when he could say, "I have behaved and quieted myself like a little child: my soul is even as a weaned child."

This is a spirit of entire dependence on God, A child has the utmost confidence in his father's power to do anything for him that he promises, and in his readiness to supply all his wants. A proud spirit of self-sufficiency is the very spirit of Lucifer, and leads to revolt and rebellion against the loving and paternal government of God, while a loving, confiding, dependent spirit sweetly reposes on the bosom of God, and says, "Not my will but thine be done." The proud, self-sufficient man speaks as if he would take the Bible, Christianity, and the church under his patronage, and as if God himself were under strong

obligations to him for defending his cause; while the humble, child-like spirit feels that it is an infinite condescension for God to permit him to engage in his service, or to put forth the smallest effort to promote his cause. The humble child of God puts his hand into his Father's hand, and permits him to lead him whithersoever he will. If it be into a wilderness of perplexity or a sea of troubles, he has confidence to depend on the hand he holds, saying, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." The vigorous understanding of the man recognizes the duty, and the loving heart of the child obeys it.

This, then, is the spirit of faith or trust. How implicitly a child trusts the word of a loving father! How happy it goes to bed, and how sweetly it sleeps upon a promise for the morrow! It does not insist upon evidence, for it suspects no deceit. "My father said so" is enough, and settles all controversies. It knows but very little of the father's plans and arrangements for its future, but it has a boundless confidence in his love and his wisdom. See that father down in the dark cellar of his dwelling. The door has been left open, and his little daughter draws near and peers into the darkness, but cannot see her loving parent. "Father, where are you?" "I am here, my child." "But I cannot see you, father." "No matter, I am here, standing with my arms stretched out to catch you. Jump, and in a moment you will be safe in my arms." The little one starts back, her color comes and goes, and her bosom heaves under the strong struggle between faith and unbelief. On the one hand she has her father's word, and he never deceived her; on the other hand, she cannot see him—she has no help from sense—it must be *all faith*. But the struggle is brief; she confidently leaps down, and is pressed to her father's heart.

Such is the struggle that many a child of God goes through. He has the plain promise, the clear testimony of God on the one hand; but then, on the other hand, his path is hedged up, all is perplexity, and he walks in darkness and has no light. His affairs are all in confusion, and his future shrouded in gloom. Courage, Christian! Remember Jesus, and hold on to the divine hand. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and

sooner would God permit all the planets with which he has peopled space to rush to ruin than suffer one of the little ones who believe in him to be forsaken.

Hannah Moore once went into the shop of a carpet-weaver, and as she looked upon the product of his industry she said that she could not understand the pattern. The loose and tangled threads seemed to her confusion instead of beauty. The weaver told her it was going to be one of the loveliest patterns he had ever wrought, at which she wondered greatly till he added, "Madam, *you are looking on the wrong side!*" So we are often looking on the wrong side of God's ways, but faith teaches us to trust him where we cannot see him; and in proportion as we do so will our way open before us, our lips will be filled with songs of gratitude, and we will be able to say with the holy Fletcher, "I am poor in nothing but thanks."

Another emotion which should be enkindled at the table of the Lord is that of love to Jesus. A Roman servant, knowing that assassins were watching for the life of his master, whom he dearly loved, dressed himself in his master's clothes, in order that he might be mistaken for him and put to death in his stead. The result answered his expectations, and he died for the man he loved. We are told that his master caused his statue in brass to be erected as a monument of his deep gratitude. But what should be the fervor of our love to Him who gave up his life—not for his friends, but for his enemies! A careless sinner, returning from a place of worship lately, expressed his approval of the sermon and of the preacher by the remark, "He thinks a great deal of Jesus—doesn't he?"

And under what everlasting obligations to love and devotedness has Jesus laid us! As an old writer says: "Oh, astonishing love! that the General should die for the soldier, the Physician for the patient, the Master for the servant, the Shepherd for the sheep, the innocent for the guilty, the just for the unjust, the Prince for the rebel, the Lord of Glory for the children of disobedience, He that was without sin for him that was without all righteousness; yea, the Creator for the creature—God for man—the righteous Judge to put himself in the male-

factor's clothes and room, and suffer death for him! Glorious Saviour! what love was this, that thou shouldst become 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;' that from the womb to the tomb, from the cradle to the Cross, thy whole life should be a continued martyrdom; that thou shouldst be content to be born among beasts, live among murderers, and die among thieves—and all to obtain a place among the blessed for us! Oh, the unfathomable love of Jesus! His name is love, his nature is love, his words were love, and his actions were love."

But when we try to speak of Christ's love we feel that language fails us, and the mind staggers back from the attempt to grasp the subject. We stand and gaze into the subject, exclaming, "O the heights and O the depths!" We take our position on Calvary, and in view of the Cross we sit down beside the holy John and the beloved Marys, and say, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us." And after all that we have said, and thought, and heard upon the love of Christ, we feel that we are only wandering around the edges of a vast ocean, without bottom, and that it will take eternity itself to explore. Now it is this love he would have us to remember, that it may kindle up love in our hearts in return. That love of his is well remembered in heaven; but it is a burning shame that on earth, the very place where its rich glories were displayed, it should be forgotten.

We are to remember him as the coming Lord. "Do this in remembrance of me *till I come*." Sometimes we make a great feast in honor of some hero or benefactor; but then he is present to enjoy it and receive our honors. But this feast is spread in honor of an absent friend. True, he is present in his spiritual power; but we are taught to look for him in his bodily preence, when we shall see the very hands that were nailed to the cross for us, and look into those very eyes that swam in tears of sorrow for us; and not only so, but when he shall thus appear "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

There was felt to be a mighty power in the hope of the Lord's coming among the primitive Christians. This ordinance was to them a sacred pledge of his returning to take

their part against all their foes. Of his coming they had no doubt, and had he appeared among them at any time it would have been nothing to them but a glad surprise. It is a most sorrowful thing that because the Lord delays his coming for some wise reasons, the church of God to a great extent has ceased to watch for his appearing with a simple faith in his words. Even many of those who are cherishing this glorious hope are, instead of simply "waiting for his Son from heaven," waiting for the appearance of certain events. Hence their constant talk is of "the beast," and "the man of sin," and the "false prophet," and the "ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image," and the drying up of the river Euphrates. They get wise above what is written, keep watching for events instead of for the Lord himself, fix times in direct opposition to our Lord's own statement, and thus, plunging into a system of mere *guessing*, each contending that his guess is the best, they lose the spiritual power and profit which the primitive disciples found by simply trusting their Lord's word and waiting for his appearing.

Let us seek to cultivate love to Christ by a constant remembrance of all he has done for us in the past, all he is doing for us in the present, and all he has pledged himself to do for us in the future. When fierce storms of temptation assail us, and we are ready to fall before their power, let us remember that we have been with Christ in his banqueting house of love, and that we are under obligations of no common kind to glorify him by a holy life. When Peter assumed the dreadful position of denying Jesus, how bitter to his soul must have been the question of an unbeliever—"Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" Ah! the terrible scenes of the garden thus suddenly called up, and the love of his Lord thus brought into contrast with his present guilty and ungrateful conduct, must have been like a sword piercing his heart! Christian, you have been seen by the world at the Lord's table, thus declaring your attachment to him; let not the inconsistency of your life bring reproach upon your Lord's cause, and condemnation upon your own soul.

MARY AND MARTHA.

To the impenitent sinner I would say: Why are you not remembering Jesus? It cannot be because he has done nothing for you, for he shed his precious blood for you; it cannot be because he has forgotten you, for every moment of your life you are the object of his care. It is because your heart, like the Inn of Bethlehem, is filled with other guests, and there is no room for the gracious Saviour. Oh, turn out of your heart these soul-enemies! Welcome the Lord of Glory into it, lest you be followed through all eternity with the bitter remembrance of ingratitude to your best friend.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST.

"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matt. 12: 50.

"The gospel," says one, "is a great mountain with two peaks —the divinity and the humanity of the Son of God." The divinity of Christ is a most vital and essential truth. It lies at the foundation of the glorious fabric of Christianity, and, taken in connection with his atoning work, is the sinner's hope. But the doctrine of the true humanity of Jesus is also vastly important. This is evident from what the Apostle John says: "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* is not of God." And again we are told: "There is one Mediator between God and man, the *man Christ Jesus*." That he was really a man, possessed of a body like our own, subject to all the trials, and sufferings, and temptations to which we are exposed, brings him very near to us. There is scarcely any situation in which we can be, unless it be a sinful one, but we find Jesus has been in it before us, and can sympathize with us in it. Are we in poverty? He, though rich, yet for our sakes became poor, and voluntarily trod the lowly walks of life. Is it our lot to labor with our own hands, and toil within the limits of some laborious occupation? Jesus was a *working man*, and dignified manual labor by his holy example. Are you bowed down by the pressure of some great sorrow? Jesus was the man of sorrows. Are you deeply distressed by the fact that members of your own family are yet out of Christ? Jesus can even sympathize with you, "for neither did his brethren believe in him." Are you persecuted, and has your name been cast out as evil, for the truth's sake? Jesus was "despised and rejected of men," and there is scarcely a term of reproach in the world's vocabulary that was not poured upon his holy head. In short, he was

"in every point" tried as we are, that he might be a sympathizing High Priest.

But there is scarcely any character under which Christ in his manhood is represented by which he comes so near and dear to us as that of FRIEND. Man is made a social being, and a large portion of our earthly enjoyments spring from the society of our friends. In praise of friendship both poetry and oratory have put forth their noblest efforts. Indeed, without the society of our friends the fairest scenes lose their attractions, and the world becomes to us a dreary blank.

A gentleman lately passing through the streets of a crowded city, in a cold rain-storm, saw a man sitting upon a door-step, shivering in the inclement blast. It was the darkness of night, and by the light of the street lamp the gentleman saw that his clothing was scanty and in rags, and that a look of utter despair sat upon his face. He asked him why he did not go home. "I have no home!" was the reply. "Who are your friends?" the gentleman asked. "I have no friends!" was the sad answer. No home—no friends! Can we conceive anything more dreary and desolate?

A young woman was lately wandering the streets of our city, not knowing where to go or what to do, and a feeling of desolation settling down upon her soul, when she saw in large letters over the door of one of our noble institutions, "Home for the Friendless." The star of hope gleamed through the darkness of her soul, and she said, "Ah! that is just what I want!" The soul pines away into hopeless misery without a friend.

Now, Jesus meets this deep want of our nature by offering to all—the most guilty transgressor, the homeless wanderer, the abandoned outcast—the precious boon of his friendship. Let me then occupy the reader's attention for a short time with some of the characteristics of Christ's friendship.

Let us remember at the very threshold of the subject, that while it is the true friendship of a man that Jesus offers us, it is also that of God. While he wears our nature and is truly our brother he is also our King. His friendship is therefore backed by Omnipotence, and it cannot, consequently, possibly fail in

what it undertakes to do for us. Man, as a sinner, is born to trouble. It is his natural inheritance, of which he is placed in immediate possession. No advantages of birth, wealth, education or wisdom can save him from this common lot. In our trouble we naturally go somewhere for help—either where we can be helped, or where we cannot. The great majority of the world's sufferers go where no help can be found: some to the frigid precepts of a cold philosophy, some to bury all thought and memory in a whirl of exciting pleasures or in the intoxicating bowl, some in the mad chase after gold, which turns to ashes in their grasp, while all agree in turning their faces away from the only friend who *can* help them.

We may have an earthly friend who is neither wanting in constancy of affection nor in willingness to make any sacrifice to aid us, but he is deficient in ability. In the dark hour of our extremity, when we most need aid, he stands by, it may be with a tearful eye and a bleeding heart, but utterly helpless to assist us. How often have we seen the fond mother gaze in unutterable anguish upon the sufferings of a child she was unable to relieve! How often does the loving friend see the object of his affection involved in difficulties which he has no power to alleviate!

But it is not so with Jesus. The hour of our extremity is the time of his gracious opportunity. Never can we be beyond the grasp of his powerful hand. His aid is as prompt as it is powerful. His resources are not only boundless, but they are available when we most require them. He is "a very present help" in time of need. He was a present help to Peter when he was sinking amid the surging waves and cried, "Lord, save or I perish!" Similar was the case of the nobleman who said, "Sir, come down ere my child die." "He is *nigh* unto all who call upon him." No matter where we may be—in the sequestered vale or in the crowded city, in the silent wilderness or in the busy marts of business, in the prisoner's cell or in the hold of the vessel rocking upon the great deep, in the deep mine or on the mountain top,—he is nigh us, with an ear ready to hear and a hand mighty to save.

It is true that for wise and holy purposes Jesus often seems to delay his coming to the help of his people. This was the case with the afflicted sisters of Bethany, when their brother lay cold in death, and yet Jesus did not come. There was a shade of reproach as well as of faith in the words of Martha—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He seems to hide himself and to delay his coming. David seems sometimes to have felt this, for he cried, "Make *haste*, O Lord, to deliver me!" But this is only in appearance. His delays, as they seem to us, are help applied at the time that will be best for us and most for his glory. He is not slow, but we are impatient. This divine Friend can make all things work together for our good. Clothed in Omnipotence, he stands by us, saying, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God." No wonder that those who realize his presence become bold and confident, and can say with David—"Though a host should encamp about me, my heart shall not fear." The sustaining power of the love of Jesus is seen in every-day life by those who mingle with the tried and suffering people of God. Let the following narrative of one who had gone through some of life's severest trials illustrate this:

I entered a cottage, [says a lady,] to pay a visit to an aged Christian. After some little chat I remarked, "You are near the end of your journey. How does the prospect appear to you?"

"I have nothing to speak of but goodness and mercy in reviewing the past," said she, "and only gratitude and praise for the present. I have not a wish in the world, and *I do not want to wish.*"

"Not a wish! and do not want to wish!" I looked round upon the neat cottage. Not a carpet—not a sofa! All was plain, neat, and comfortable. "Your life has been one of great trial and sorrow," said I: "how is it that you have arrived at this truly enviable condition?"

"It has indeed been a life of severe discipline," she replied, "but oh, how merciful! When I was left a widow, and the account reached me that my husband had died on a foreign shore, and all our property was at once swept away, then my heart re-

belled; it was more than I could bear—to look at my seven orphans, some of them mere infants, and think that their father was gone, and I wished *that I was dead!* I then knew not my Saviour, who has since proved himself the God of the widow; but in that dark night he drew near and called me first to himself, and then bade me drink of the living waters which flow from his blessed word, that I might thirst no more. But this was not enough: he opened a way for me to feed and clothe my children, and keep them all with me. Year after year he sustained me, and I have seen my children grow up and fill useful situations in society; and some of them he has better provided for—they are where they hunger no more, and thirst no more, but are with the Lamb before the throne. And now why should I wish? I dare not, lest I desire something which might not please my heavenly Father. I can think of no place in the wide universe where I should not be happy if His hand led me there. I desire Him to do just as he pleases with me. I would go to Him now cheerfully; and I often think, as I turn into my little room, I should like to die all alone with God, if it is his will, but if he pleases I can live on for years longer."

Well, thought I, such strains sound so like heavenly music, she cannot long be separated from her kindred spirits, and so the event proved. A few weeks more passed away, when an injury received from a fall laid her upon her bed to rise no more. During her few days of suffering she met every one who called with a radiant smile, telling them that the Master had sent the joyful summons, and she was hastening away—ready to depart. She caught up the louder, sweeter song to Him who loved her as she passed through the portals of death; and if heaven rejoiced to receive her, earth might well have wept to lose so much effectual prayer.

This is but one case out of thousands to be found all around us under the shadows of very humble roofs, but little known to the world, and never wanting to be known, but happy in sweet fellowship with Jesus, their heavenly Friend, and feeling peace and assurance forever while under his protection. My dear reader, will you not now choose such an Almighty Friend?

Jesus is an *unchanging Friend*—"The same yesterday, to-day and forever." It is but a trite remark to say that this is a changing world; but the sad experience of its truth, as it comes to each of us, is felt to be a startling reality. In nothing is this more felt than in the friendships of earth. Where are the friends of our youth—of our schoolboy days? Melted away like snow-flakes falling on ocean's breast! Let the man of middle life ask where are the majority of the young men who started with him in the busy scramble of life? Passed away as forgotten shadows! Let the aged parent ask where are those who formed that gay and happy group of prattlers around his family hearth but a few years ago? Scattered like the leaves of the forest! Some in foreign lands have found a grave; one, perhaps, lies fathoms down in the deep, green sea, the waves chanting his requiem; another, it may be, found a soldier's grave while nobly standing up in defence of the liberties of his country; while of the scattered survivors, tossed here and there by the ever-changing waves of circumstances, but few will ever meet again! When we have reached the age of forty years we begin to feel as if surrounded by a dark, solemn circle of graves—the graves of our friends; and every year thereafter the circle increases, till it seems as if the memories of our past friendships were all associated with graves.

> "Friend after friend departs!
> Who has not lost a friend?
> There is no union here of hearts
> That knows not here an end."

Here let us remark, however, that it is not the grave alone that shows the changeableness of human friendships. Sometimes a change of outward circumstances will separate those who at one time seemed inseparable in their love. Fortune, as it is called, has turned against you. Money has made to itself wings and flown away. Your property has left you; your business, once prosperous, has gradually forsaken you; and from walking on the eminences of life, you have been compelled to get down into its lowest vales. Ah! where are now the hosts

of friends that gathered around you in the sunshine of your prosperity? The garden has many admirers and visitors when it is blooming with flowers and abounding with fruit, in summer days; but in the winter of its desolation it is forsaken. So is it with you. He who was your warmest friend at one time now passes you on the street with scarcely a nod of recognition. Even some to whom you gave their first start in life, and who owe their present prosperity largely to your kindness, will pass to the other side of the street to avoid meeting you. You turn away from this exhibition of pride and heartlessness with a bitter contempt, perhaps, for the friendship of the world rankling in your heart.

Sometimes, too, the warmest friendships of earth are sundered by misrepresentations and misunderstandings. Perhaps the tongue of slander has come between you and the warm heart of your friend, and now there is coldness in his manner towards you and distance on his brow; yea, instead of the warm tokens of friendship that once passed between you, you now meet as strangers in places of public resort. This often makes you sick at heart, and leads you to serious reflections on the emptiness of all earthly joys.

Now I invite you to the warm, loving heart of Jesus, who proffers you a friendship that neither time nor eternity can change. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The world may frown, but He will smile upon you. The gay, the vain, the heartless throng, who professed to be your friends, may scatter from you in the dark day of adversity, but He will come nearer, and you will hear his voice saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Death can never remove this Friend from you, for he "liveth for evermore." Your own death, instead of separating you, will only bring you nearer to him, "to be forever with the Lord." Come, then, and trust upon the unchanging word of this unchangeable Friend, who "sticketh closer than a brother," and who, as the faithful and true Witness, "never deceives."

Jesus is a *Faithful Friend.* He is faithful to his promises. David says: "He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordained in all things and sure." You have a friend who has made you a solemn promise. You have the utmost faith in his word, and rely upon its fulfillment with the most implicit confidence; but when the time arrives for that word to be honored, you find you have been depending upon a broken reed—you either find the promise deliberately broken or so lightly esteemed that it was altogether forgotten. But the promises of Jesus can be trusted without any danger of disappointment. They are said to be "exceeding great and precious." The value of a promissory note consists in the certainty that he who gives it will honor it. This makes the promises of Christ very precious. He cannot fail to keep his word. "The word of the Lord endureth forever."

> "Though cisterns be broken, and creatures all fail,
> The word he has spoken will surely prevail."

It is the confidence which the Christian has in this that makes the promises of Jesus so precious to him. A promise from one who has failed to perform cannot secure strong faith. The thing promised may be precious, and such as we very much need and desire; but fear and hope struggle in our hearts when we think of the unreliable character of the promiser. But we can rest with joyful confidence upon the word of our heavenly Friend. As the wise man so beautifully says—"Blessed be the Lord, who hath given rest unto his people, according to all that he promised. There shall not fail one word of all his promises." His promises prop up the soul when ready to fall. Said a dying saint, "I am living on the promises." And good food for the soul they make: they impart strength in the greatest weakness.

The Rev. Dr. McLeod says: "The other day I was requested by a brother minister who was unwell to go and visit a dying child. He told me some remarkable things of this boy, who was but eleven years of age, and during three years' sickness had manifested the most patient submission to the will of God,

with a singular enlightenment of the Spirit. I went to visit him. The child had suffered excruciating pain;—for years he had not known one day's rest. I gazed in wonder at the boy. After drawing near to him, and speaking some words of sympathy, he looked at me with his blue eyes—he could not move; it was the night before he died—and breathed into my ear these few words: 'I am strong in Him!' The words were few and utterly feeble; they were the words of a feeble child, in a poor home, where the only ornament was that of a meek, quiet, and affectionate mother. But these words seemed to lift the burden from the very heart; they seemed to make the world more beautiful than ever it was before; they brought home to my heart a great and blessed truth. May all of us be 'strong in Him.'"

Yes, in the most trying circumstances a promise from the lips of this faithful Friend can impart vigor and power to the soul. This sustained the soul of the great missionary, Dr. Judson, in the darkest hour of his trials. When one asked him, "Do you think the prospects bright of the speedy conversion of the heathen?" his reply was, "As bright as the promises of God." So great was his confidence in the faithful promises of his heavenly Friend, that his biographer says: "It never appeared to him possible for a moment that God could fail to do precisely as he had said, and he therefore relied on the divine assurance with a confidence that excluded all wavering. He believed that Burmah was to be converted to Christ just as much as he believed that Burmah existed. He believed that he had been sent there to preach the gospel; and he as much believed that the Holy Ghost would make his labors, in some way or at some time, the means of the salvation of the nation, as he believed that there was a Holy Ghost." That is the way to trust such a faithful Friend as our adorable Saviour. He likes to be so trusted, and those who honor him he will honor. Yea, he honors them already in the bestowal of that very faith and the sweet peace that is consequent upon it. In ancient times, when any distinguished man gave his pledge for the fulfillment of any object, he often gave his staff, his signet, or his bracelets, or

something of that kind, as an earnest that his promise would be honored. So when Jesus gives his people strong faith, so that they already feel as much peace as if in possession of the blessing, it is his pledge that at the right time the promise shall be fulfilled.

There is another sense in which Jesus is a faithful Friend: he reproves those whom he loves, and corrects their faults. Never trust that friend who will never tell you his faults. We are always very sensitive about the faults of those we love; and in proportion to the depth and purity of our love will be the fervor of our anxiety to have them purged from their faults and imperfections. Jesus tenderly loves his own people; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye—they are his jewels that he looks upon with delight, and that he paid a large ransom for. He loves to present his people before the world as a proof of the efficacy of his blood. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Now all this implies that he must greatly desire their purification. Hence that loving hand that has heretofore wiped away their falling tears—that hand that was nailed to the Cross for them, and that has abundantly provided for their wants, takes up the rod of correction, and chastises those whom he loves. Though judgment is his strange work, and he is more accustomed to scatter blessings than to use the rod, yet in mercy to our souls he lets us feel its smart. Our besetting sins must be mortified, else they will be overlooked and gain strength by indulgence. Prosperity, like the rain and the sunshine upon weeds, makes our sins grow faster; so he sends adversity like the wintry frosts, to nip them in the bud. In his wisdom he sees that we have need of "manifold trials," in order to purge away our dross.

Jesus, as a faithful Friend, is under the necessity of putting us often through fiery trials. He has no pleasure in our pain, but he has in our profit. He may have to take away many things from us that we greatly prized, but the object is to take away our dross; and when the believer is brought to see this, oh, how it increases his love to his heavenly Friend! You will see him come out of all his trials with a lovely mellowness of

character, the rough points all smoothed off, and a gentleness, humility, and mildness of spirit that tell you the Son of God has been walking in the furnace with him. He gives himself to Jesus with a fresh consecration, and while the tears of his sufferings are yet moist upon his cheeks, he says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." He now loves Jesus more than ever, and trusts him more than ever. He can already sing a song that he will be able to sing in nobler strains in heaven—"My Saviour has done all things well!" We would love the friend that pulled us out of the fire, even if he had to use great roughness to do so. We would love the friend that would drag us from a watery grave, even by the hair of the head. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

I need scarcely say that Jesus is a *most loving Friend.* His love has been proved—not in word, but in deed and in truth. We justly think little of the friendship that will make no sacrifices for those it professes to love. But Jesus made sacrifices for us, compared with which all that men call such are dwarfed into insignificance. Can you for a moment doubt his love? Then go to Gethsemane—go to Calvary, and read the story of his love in letters of blood!

"Ah! never, never canst thou know
What then for thee the Saviour bore;
The pangs of that mysterious woe
That wrung his frame at every pore;
The weight that pressed upon his brow—
The fever of his bosom's core!
A sweet but solitary beam,
An emanation from above,
Glimmers o'er life's uncertain dream:
We hail that beam and call it Love!
But fainter than the pale star's ray
Before the noontide's blaze of day,
And lighter than the viewless sand
Beneath the waves that sweep the strand,
Is all of love that man can know—
All that in angels' breasts can glow,
Compared, O Lord of Hosts, with thine—
Eternal—fathomless—divine!"

In the exercise of that love he supplies the wants of his friends—our *wants*, not our *wishes*. We often wish for that which if given would prove our ruin. "My God will supply all your wants, according to his riches in Christ Jesus." During the famine Joseph labored to supply the wants of his father's household. Not one of these dear ones must be allowed to want. And will He, whose is "the earth and the fullness thereof," suffer his children to lack any good thing?

The love of Jesus leads him to keep up a constant intercourse with his friends. When those who love each other on earth are separated for a time, they delight in keeping up an intercourse by letter. You will see the husband or wife, when absent from home, go to the post office with eager steps to get a communication from the loved ones at home; and you will see them return with a sad or a cheerful countenance according to the nature of the communication received. So Jesus, when about to depart from his disciples, said, "If I depart I will send the Comforter," and by means of this divine Comforter he still keeps up sweet intercourse with his people. Many a sweet promise is spoken to the heart—many a word in season is brought home to the soul—many a message of love, never to be forgotten, is thus communicated from the throne of the Great High Priest. And the communications are not all one way. From the darkest and the remotest spot of earth the believer can reach the ear of his heavenly Friend. Prayer swiftly reaches him, and is a mode of telegraphing as ancient as the promises of God and the wants of man. Oh, miserable is that man who has no intercourse with heaven, and whose case is described in the words, "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will *not hear me!*"

Dear reader, is this heavenly Friend yours, or are you an enemy by wicked works? If you are related to the Saviour he gives you a mark by which you may know it—you will "do the will of your father which is in heaven." There will be in your character a likeness to this blessed Friend. There is generally a resemblance between near relations—a family likeness by which they can be distinguished. At least this is the case with all those who are spiritually related to Jesus. "They are con-

formed to the likeness of his Son." On the principle that what we love we imitate, this resemblance keeps constantly increasing, till finally "they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is." If you belong to the glorious household of faith, your heavenly Friend will soon take you to himself, to go no more out forever. You shall occupy a mansion which he has prepared for you, and know the fullness of rapture implied in the words "being with the Lord." To be with him is to be absent from all evil and present with all good.

Is the reader compelled to confess to himself that he has no interest in Jesus as a friend, and that his heart is preoccupied with other friendships? I pity your condition, and I pray that your eyes may now be opened to see the folly of your choice. Oh, dark and cheerless is that man's heart that has got no Christ in it! How are you to cross that great gulf between you and the eternal world without Christ? Who is to hold up your sinking head amid the swellings of Jordan? Who is to befriend you when huge billows of fire are chasing each other across the globe, or when before the judgment tribunal?

The gracious Saviour has the highest claims upon your gratitude and love. Summon around you all the blessings of your past life—of childhood, manhood, age—all have come from the hand of this heavenly Friend. Your earthly friends have been the gift of his hand. The home that has sheltered you, the food that has nourished you, the health that has glowed in your bosom and danced through your veins, the position of respectability you have occupied, and all the enjoyments that have made your life pleasant have been the undeserved gifts of the very Saviour whose friendship you are rejecting.

Are you prepared to abandon forever all connection with Jesus? Are you ready to cut the cords and break the bands of his love, that he has been so tenderly winding around you? Are you willing to say to him, "Depart from me! I desire not a knowledge of thy ways?" If not, then why do you hesitate to give him your heart? Perhaps you are ashamed to come boldly out from the world and from your companions, and make a public profession that Jesus is your Friend. If so, rather be

ashamed of yourself, of your own base ingratitude and life-long rebellion, and in simple faith give yourself to Christ in an everlasting union.

"When most we need his helping hand,
This friend is always near;
With heaven and earth at his command,
He waits to answer prayer."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CHRIST SUCCORING THE TEMPTED.

"For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2 : 18.

That there are wicked spirits in the world, filled with intense hatred against God and all good, and under the leadership of the prince of darkness, Satan or the devil, constantly engaged in seeking the ruin of human souls, is a clear doctrine of the Bible. Every plain, unbiassed reader of the word of God will find this truth taught all through the pages of revelation, sometimes in direct statements, and sometimes implied and taken for granted; and it is not until men have some huge error to support, some favorite theory of their own to sustain, that they ever think of denying the existence of a personal devil, and transforming him into nothing more than an *abstract principle* of evil. Indeed it is one of Satan's most masterly strokes to get men to deny his existence, and thus be entirely thrown off their guard. Besides. when he can induce men to deny his existence, he has them on the high road to deny the existence of the Great Jehovah himself, making him but an abstract principle in nature. Men often sneer at the doctrine of Satanic agency in the world, and make it the butt of their stale witticisms, when they themselves present the most striking illustration of its truth. With their vapid jokes in their mouths, and uttering big swelling words of vanity, they are all the time being "led captive by the devil at his will." Having put out their eyes, Satan keeps them grinding at his mill as his willing slaves.

There are those who, though not denying the doctrine of Satanic agency, yet say they have no personal experience of the power of his temptations. This may arise from the fact that they are quietly submitting to his control. The slaveholder does not send out the bloodhounds and the slavehunter after the

slave who is quietly working in his fields, submissive to his will. No, it is after the man who has broken his bonds, and is making a desperate effort for his liberty, that he raises the hue and cry. So long as the Israelites were content to toil at the brick-kilns of Egypt, and bow themselves submissively to the will of their tyrant, Pharaoh, he gave them no particular disturbance; but when the word of deliverance went forth from the mouth of Jehovah, and the people prepared to leave their hard task-masters, and started for the land of freedom, then the wrath of the tyrant was awakened, and he sent his blood-thirsty hosts after them. You are not sensible of any resistance when your boat is going with the current; but try to stem the flood, and you will find you have an opposition to encounter. Sunk in your sins, Satan does not need to tempt you—"His goods are at peace." Highway robbers do not waylay beggars and seek to rob them of their old rags; it is those whom they hope to plunder of valuable possessions for whose footsteps they watch. Piratical ships on the high seas only attack such vessels as they think are laden with rich treasure.

So we find that Christians of the richest spiritual experience are most violently attacked by the enemy of souls. Yea, often after enjoying the sweetest communications from heaven, the happy soul has the darkest attacks from hell, just as Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted immediately after the glorious scenes at his baptism. An old divine says: "The less peace you have from the devil, the more pleasure you may take in the reflection that you have escaped out of his clutches. The more restlessly he follows you with the fury of many temptations, the more sweetly and securely, if you give way to the counsel of the prophets and the work of faith, may you repose your wearied soul upon the comfortable assurance of being certainly a child of God." Another old writer uses the following language in repelling Satan's fiery darts: "I am now in Christ, a new creature, and that is what troubles thee, Satan. I might have continued in sins long enough ere thou wouldst have been vexed at it, but now I see thou dost envy me the grace of my Saviour."

As every true Christian, then, is likely—nay, *certain* to be tempted, and is not to feel when even fiery temptations come as if "some strange thing had happened to him," let me direct attention to the succor to be drawn from Christ in every such trial.

We learn, from the life of Jesus that it is *no sin to be tempted.* There are many conscientous and devoted Christians who endure a great amount of distress because they have not understood the distinction between sinning and being tempted to sin. Their religious history has been rendered unhappy, they have been robbed of the peace and the joy which the gospel imparts, and have been employed in writing dark and bitter things against themselves, for want of a proper consideration of this subject in the light of God's word and of our Saviour's life. Temptation properly means trial. It is a part of our probation upon earth—the means by which the soul is tested. God permits temptation to come upon us for the very purpose of proving us and giving us a better acquaintance with our own hearts. Sin consists not in *having* the temptation but in *yielding to it.* No matter how vile the thoughts that the enemy may thrust into the mind, no matter how wicked the action to which his suggestions may prompt, when the soul hates them, and turns with loathing from them, instead of the soul being stained with sin by the temptation, it is actually strengthened in virtue. Thus Satan's machinations are defeated, and the blow aimed at the soul made to fall upon himself.

It is doubtless on this account that temptation is represented to be a blessing to the man who overcomes. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1 : 12. Here the temptation is called a *trial*, not a *sin.* As our bodily powers develop and strengthen by exercise, so is it with the graces of the soul. The soul that has resisted and conquered the temptation comes out of it with a stronger faith in the promises that sustain him, with a deeper conviction of his constant danger, and consequently more disposed to constant watchfulness, and with a firmer persuasion

that through perfect weakness in himself he is strong in Christ. Thus temptation, like affliction, is one of the *all things* that can be made to work together for our good. Though while under its influence it is a great trial and most distressing to the soul, yet it works out for us much spiritual profit. Peter in his first epistle clearly shows this: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Here it is taught that there was a "need be" for the temptations which were permitted to fall to the lot of these Christians, and that though on account of them they were at the time in great heaviness of spirit, yet the trial was precious to them in its blessed results.

That to be tempted is not to sin is made very plain in the fact that the Lord Jesus was tempted. He, though holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, was yet tempted as few of his followers have ever been. In Matthew 4: 1—11 we have an account of the three different forms in which our Lord was tempted, yet without sin. Surely it is enough if the disciple be as his Lord. If he was not exempted from fiery trials of this kind, why should his followers expect to be? And in his resistance of these temptations he has left us a bright example that we may follow his steps. On this subject a judicious writer says: "We learn from this history that human nature, even in its most perfect state, and in all circumstances, is incident to temptations: that a pre-eminence of character, station, and endowments is attended with proportionable difficulties and dangers; that these trials are no signs of God's displeasure, but the appointments of his wisdom and goodness for our benefit—the means of brightening our virtues and of rendering our future crown more illustrious; that Christians have sufficient encouragement, from the tenderness and sympathy which Christ acquired by his sufferings, to expect all necessary succor under their infirmities and trials. We cannot faint when we listen to his animating voice addressing us from heaven: 'To him that

overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set with my Father on his throne.'"

Before leaving this part of the subject permit me to call my reader's attention to the manner in which our Lord resisted the attacks of the wicked one. It was by the word of God. To every fresh assault he presented the shield of God's eternal truth. To every suggestion of Satan's hellish logic he presented the words, "It is written." We have a powerful and subtle foe to contend with, and if we meet him with the weapons of our own reasoning we shall surely be foiled; but if we meet him with the "Sword of the Spirit, the word of God," we shall come off victorious. The father of lies quails before the truth as it comes fresh and burning from the lips of Jehovah. One of Satan's constant efforts is to get people to neglect their Bibles; and when he succeeds in this for a time, then he will become bolder, and present dark infidel suggestions to the mind, with a view to rob them of the consolations of the Bible altogether. Then, if this latter temptation is not promptly resisted, but wicked and infidel thoughts are indulged, the enemy will tell the soul that it is now utterly gone—that all hope of ever being better may as well be abandoned. Oh, how much mental suffering I have known persons to go through from this cause!—and all because they did not resist the devil in the first place, when tempted to neglect their Bibles.

The most persistent attacks of the enemy of souls is upon our *faith*. So long as the mind rests with implicit confidence on the finished work of Jesus, and stands upon the promises of God as upon a rock, all the powers of hell cannot shake it. The chief danger of temptation consists in the mind getting turned away from Christ. When Peter thought of the servants, and of their scorn and derision, instead of keeping his mind fixed upon his Master and his approbation, he fell into grievous sin. And so it is in every case; faith must be shaken and unbelief introduced into the heart before it will "give place to the devil." Christ's strength is the only true succor. His name has still power to drive Satan from the souls of men. The truth as it is in Jesus is a wall of fire around the soul, which the lion may roar around, but cannot break through.

The apostle says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." When faith is strong the soul is fortified at every point where Satan makes his attack. Our *dread of ridicule* is a strong feeling in our nature. To be exposed to the laughter of those around us is to many minds far more distressing than to be exposed to severe bodily suffering. Many a young man have I known whom no threats, no personal abuse, could have turned aside from his seriousness and thoughtfulness on the subject of religion, and yet who has been intimidated by the laughter of a few fools. In the day of judgment it will be found that multitudes have bartered away their souls to avoid the sneers of a class of poor flippant, silly triflers, that in their hearts they could not but despise. Now faith lifts the soul above this, by making the favor and approbation of God supreme. We see this illustrated in the case of Noah. In the midst of the ungodly crew by which he was surrounded he must have been exposed to an unmerciful torrent of ridicule, as he went on from day to day building the ark and warning his neighbors of an approaching deluge, while the heavens were all bright, and everything indicated that nature's usual beneficent operations were all going on. But he had faith in God, and he let them laugh on, "sorry," as one says, "to see so many fools, but glad to think that they considered him as an outlaw to their number." Faith in God's word, then, defeats Satan in the use of his chief instruments for the destruction of souls.

Another passion of human nature that the enemy works upon is *love of fame*. To stand well in the estimation of others, to have their names spoken of in terms of high approval, to occupy a lofty position among their fellow-men, is the object for which many live—the thing that they set before them as the great business of life. Satan takes advantage of this, and represents the utter impossibility of being religious until they shall have attained this coveted position in the estimation of their fellow-men. Hence we read of the chief rulers in the days of the Saviour, that the principal obstacle that stood in the way of their being saved was that "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They feared being put out of the

synagogue, of losing their position among their fellow-men, and of being exposed to the hatred and persecution of the Pharisees. Jesus said to all such, "How can ye believe who receive honor one of another." But faith in Jesus reverses this state of things, and makes the soul esteem the praise of God above everything else. The approbation of God becomes of infinite importance—that of the world comparatively valueless. Moses is a striking illustration of this. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming *the reproach of Christ greater riches* than the treasures in Egypt." This was a noble and heroic resolution, involving great sacrifices, and yet faith enabled him to do it. Egypt, with all her glories, lay at his feet; a throne, at that time the most illustrious on earth, was within his grasp: and yet faith enabled him to reject it all, and to join himself to a despised people—a people driven out daily to their wasting toil, as slaves under the caprice of a tyrant. Here, then, we see how faith in Jesus can render powerless another of Satan's temptations, the love of human praise.

So it is with the love of money. To be rich, and to possess the splendor, the elegances and the influence in the world which riches give, is the god of many. It is that for which thousands sacrifice their souls. A young man, a member of my congregation, and with whom the Holy Spirit had long striven, confessed that the chief reason why he did not accept of Christ was that he thought it would interfere with his business, and that he was determined to get on in the world, as he called it. This was the means by which Satan sought to effect the ruin of this soul. There are thousands of such cases all around us, though they may not speak it out with the same candor as he. Their increasing treasures, their splendid business, their magnificent dwellings, with all their beautiful surroundings, are all the price of blood—the blood of their souls!—not that there is anything wicked in being rich, or anything in religion to hinder a man being an energetic and successful man of business; but Satan has worked upon their love of money, and persuaded

them that in some way religion would interfere with their temporal success in life.

Now faith in Jesus would at once break this snare. It teaches us that we are not our own, and that we are sent into this world not to make money, but to glorify God in everything that we do. We are to be dilligent and enterprising in business, but it is to be for God. If we make money it is not to be to love it and make an idol of it, but to glorify God with it. This is the difference between the Christian and the man of the world. The Christian may toil, and struggle, and make sacrifices of his ease to make money, just as the worldly man does, but the motive is as different as heaven and hell. He does it not for the gratification of selfishness, not from love of gain, not to feed vanity, but to glorify God. He feels that he is the Lord's steward, that he is doing business for God, and that the loving eye of God is every moment fixed upon him with approval. This is something of which the world can form no true conception. The motives drawn from the Cross are too high and ennobling to be appreciated by carnal men.

One of our missionaries, while laboring among the Cherokees in Georgia, was visited by a skeptic who wished to find some accusation against the missionary work. After staying at the station long enough to be satisfied that the labor to be performed was most arduous and self-denying, he put some questions to the missionary's wife.

"Well, I suppose your husband gets a very high salary for such a service?"

"Oh, yes," she replied.

"How much does he get, madam? Five hundred dollars?"

"Oh, yes; more than that!"

"One thousand dollars?"

"Oh, more than that!"

"One thousand five hundred dollars?"

"Oh, much more than that!"

"More than that!"

"Yes, 'one hundred fold in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting!'"

"Poh! it was money I meant," said he.

"As to that, sir," she replied, "the property here is owned by the mission, and we have the promise of such living as you see, while we are able to render such services as I have spoken of."

Another way in which Jesus Christ succors the tempted is by intercession on their behalf. When Peter was tempted our Lord said to him, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And as an evidence that this was not an exceptional case, we are told that "If *any man* sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And also that "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." When the soul has been tempted, and has fallen and deeply sinned, the next effort of the enemy is to drive it into despair. The mind is kept brooding upon the sin till hope dies out, and bitter remorse, with its unspeakable agony, takes possession of it.

"The man that broods o'er sinful deeds
Is like a scorpion girt with fire:
In circles narrowing as it glows,
The flames around the captive close;
So does the guilty soul expire,
Like to the scorpion girt with fire.
So writhes the mind remorse has riven—
Unfit for earth, undoom'd to heaven;
Darkness above, despair beneath—
Around it flame, within it death!"

We cannot sink into such a state of mind if we look at our Great Advocate. "If any man sin," let him not despair, let him not seek to flee from God, let him not seek to cleanse himself from his sin, but go at once to the Advocate provided for such an emergency. Notice the expression—"we *have* an Advocate." We do not need to wait till some arrangements can be made to meet our case. We may go to a great physician, and he may be either away from home, or so engaged with other patients that he cannot now attend to our case; but without delay, without hindrance of any kind, Jesus can meet our case. Through

all temptations he has his sympathizing eye upon us, and will never cease to plead for and strengthen the soul that trusts in him.

> "The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose,
> I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
> That soul, though *all hell* should endeavor to shake,
> I'll never—no, never—no, never forsake!"

Jesus speaks to us that sweet promise, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." The deeper the sense of your sin, let it drive you the closer to Christ. Augustine said: "The more desperate my case was, the more I admired my physician." A good man, when dying, being much tempted by the enemy, silenced him by saying, "I die wrapped in the merits of Jesus, and I shall lie down in the grave wrapped in the merits of Jesus, and I shall rise in the morning of the resurrection wrapped in the merits of Jesus." The devil still flies before such arguments, saying, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God!"

Some Christians are greatly troubled with a constant dread of falling away, and bringing a reproach upon the cause of Christ. This is often a temptation of the devil, and shows that he can transform himself into the appearance of an angel of light. His greatest wish is to get you to fall away, and disgrace by your fall the cause of Christ; and yet he seeks to stir up great solicitude in your mind about falling away. If he cannot succeed in keeping you *from Christ*, he will seek to disturb your peace *in Christ* as much as possible. By getting you to fix your mind upon yourself, and upon your danger of falling away, your eyes are turned away from Jesus, and love to him begins to give place to fear for yourself. The Rev. John Newton says, "Love and fear are like the sun and moon—seldom seen together." Your eyes being turned from Jesus, your love to God begins to decline, and the fear that hath torment begins to take its place. Thus, in another form your *faith* has been attacked, and the love that casteth out fear weakened.

This attack upon your faith is all the more dangerous that it

comes in such a pious form. If your mind can be occupied with fears for your religion, or anything else that will turn you away from entire trust in the Saviour, the enemy's object will be accomplished. Thus, while the deceiver is fixing your mind upon some damage to your faith some time in the future, he has actually succeeded in weakening your faith *now*, by turning your attention away from Christ. Shake yourself loose from the delusion, and give good heed to the Lord's words—"Look unto me and be ye saved." When Peter looked at Jesus, and thought of his invitation, he could walk upon the sea; but when he began to look at the waves, and to think of himself and his danger, then he began to sink. His faith within him gave way first, before the sea under him began to give way. We are told that "when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid." But did he not know this before he started? Nothing new in the way of difficulty had occurred but his own unbelief. There was nothing to prevent his *continuing* his journey that might not have prevented its *beginning*.

Thus, the same power that drew you to Christ at first can keep you in Christ. The same faith that gives you joy and confidence in Christ for a day or a week can keep you for a lifetime. The people of God are described as those "who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation." What better security could we ask than the Almighty arm around us, and the Eternal Truth pledged for our defense? God's people are dear to him as the apple of his eye. He sees us in the wilderness, exposed to many perils and struggling with a relentless foe; but he never loses sight of us for a moment, and though unseen we can hear his voice, that thrills through the soul of the tempted and tried—"Fear not, for I am with thee." "It is I: be not afraid."

Akin to the temptation from the fear of falling away is that of the constant dread of *self-deception*. That thousands are deceiving themselves, and being deceived by others, is a sad truth; and if such could be startled from their self-security, and made to fear, it would be a good thing. But Satan will not disturb such. It is when the young Christian is rejoicing in

the Saviour, his happy heart glowing under the influence of his first love, that the temptation will come and cast a dark cloud of doubt over his bright prospects. This great solicitude of Satan who has always been the deceiver of souls, not to have you deceived, is a circumstance that ought to awaken your suspicion. The mind cannot be strongly occupied with two things at one time; and when it becomes intensely engaged with the danger of being deceived, the attention is turned away from Christ. Then the sweet peace of simple trust is gone, and the distressed mind is set to the unprofitable work of analyzing its own feelings to see if it is not deceived. The days and nights of such souls become unhappy, because they are looking at themselves instead of looking to Christ—consulting their own mental states and changes instead of the plain testimony of God concerning his Son.

There is but one way by which this temptation can be conquered and Satan's weapons turned against himself, and that is by making use of it to lead you to take *a firmer hold of Christ.* It is unnecessary for me to enumerate a long list of temptations, for the object of the enemy in all of them is to keep the soul from Christ. The attack is invariably upon our *faith*, for if that stands the shock all is secure. We stand by faith if we stand at all. We are to walk by faith, and not by sight. Hence says the apostle: "Above all, taking *the shield of faith*, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on *the breastplate of faith.*"

If tempted to think ourselves self-deceived, let us ask ourselves—"On what has my hope been founded? Has it been on myself, my prayers, my feelings, my experiences, or my works? Has it been on the opinions, or counsels, or prayers, or services of my fellow-men? Is it upon the merits of Jesus only? And if so, was not that the only hope of John, Paul, Peter, and all the Christians of primitive times? Is that not the ground upon which God commands me to build my confidence? I have done so, and would he deceive me by telling me to build upon what would give way under me? No!—I am

now upon the Rock of ages, and no power can drive me thence!" Thus the temptation will be overruled for our good—to strengthen our faith and confirm our hold of the truth; for God can make the wrath both of men and of devils to praise him.

If we would resist temptation successfully we must live in the constant use of believing prayer. There is much that is called prayer that neither heaven nor hell regards as such. There is the prayer of mere habit or form; there is the prayer of pride or human merit, performed chiefly to boast of; there is the prayer of selfishness, performed to satisfy conscience, and to give a man peace with himself; there is the prayer to the public, done to be seen of men; there is the prayer of wrath and bitterness, made a medium of conveying something offensive to the ears of those we dislike. Now, no doubt it is quite true what the poet has said, that

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

yet it would require a great many *such prayers* as those described above to make Satan tremble. He would just as soon have men praying in such a way as swearing. It is the prayer of *faith*, that goes with the blood of Christ into the holy of holies—that takes the new and living way of access to God—that sends up every cry of the heart perfumed with the precious blood of Jesus, which makes the enemy tremble and flee. The biographer of Robert Hall tells us that on one occasion he got into a discussion with some person in a promiscuous company. He became very warm, and no doubt felt himself under a strong temptation to the indulgence of a bitter spirit in his remarks, when he instantly left the brother with whom he was conversing, and going to a retired part of the room, one heard him in an earnest whisper say, "O Lord Jesus, calm my perturbed spirit!" He then returned to his friend, and continued the discussion in the most mild and Christian temper. On another occasion, when tempted to pride on account of his great popularity, Mr. Greene says, "I found him praying in a retired part of the garden. *He was alone, and in an agony.* Uncon-

scious of my approach, with the deepest expressions of humility and self-abasement he mourned over the imperfections of his best services, and prayed that through the blood of sprinkling the iniquity of his holy things might be forgiven. Like Jacob of old, he wrestled with God—he prayed with strong cries and tears." This is the way to resist the devil and he will flee from you."

At the same time we must *avoid* all temptation. When we pray "lead us not into temptation," we must not rush into it ourselves. We must shun the appearance of evil, and hate the garment spotted by the flesh. We must not even *seem* to come short. We must not dabble around the edges of sin. We must not *tempt the devil to tempt us*. In short, we must aim at eminent holiness of heart, great nearness to God, and much likeness to Christ. Above all, draw constant strength from your perfect Saviour. His omnipotent hand will hold you, if you commit yourself entirely to him. When Antigonus was about to engage in a fight at sea with Ptolemy, the pilot cried, "How many are they more than we!" But the King said, "It is true, if you count their numbers; but for how many do you value me?" If you have only Christ with you, you need not care who is against you.

"Jesus, in weakness of this flesh,
When Satan grasps me for his prey,
Oh, give me victory afresh,
And speed me on my stranger way!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PARTING COUNSELS.

DEAR READER: It has been our privilege in the preceding pages to stand at the Cross of Christ, that only safe place for a sinner, and together to contemplate the glories of Him who is the "chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely." We must now part company, to meet at the bar of God, where I must give an account for what I have written, and you for what you have read. It has been my wish to make the plan of salvation plain, so that you might see it in all its beautiful simplicity; but as I am aware that the religion of many consists in boasting of their clear views, and that such is the self-righteousness of the heart that men make a Saviour of their simple faith, instead of going to the Great Author and Object of faith, my earnest prayer has been that the Holy Spirit might take these vitally important truths and impress them on your hearts.

When the Roman army besieged Jerusalem, and took it after the bravest and most determined resistance on the part of the Jews that the world has ever seen, the Temple was the last part to yield. The Romans could only enter it over piles of the brave dead; but when they did enter, we are told that they were astonished to find no *images* there. In their own temples at Rome images of their gods appeared everywhere; but there, neither within the veil nor without, could anything of the kind be found. Many emblems of God's grace might be found in every part of that magnificent building, but there was no graven or sculptured image of the God of Israel.

So it is still. All the great objects of our faith and hope are invisible. The Great Father to whom we pray, the gracious Son through whom we present our supplications, the blessed Spirit that gives the praying heart, the heaven we seek to reach, and the hell we seek to avoid, are all unseen. The things that

are seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal. It would be easy for God to make himself visible to us every day, but his design is that we should live by faith, not by sight. This very invisibility of the great things of eternity forms an important part of our probation. Those who have faith in the words of God live as seeing Him who is invisible; whilst those who live in unbelief live but a kind of animal existence, influenced only by the things which are seen and which are temporal. Because Jehovah's displeasure is "wrath to come," they think it never will come. Because He does not appear in judgment when they supposed he would, they come to the conclusion that he never will appear, and sneeringly cry, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

But this invisibility in which the Eternal One has so long wrapped himself is yet to be laid aside. He is coming forth from his long concealment, when every eye shall see him, every ear hear him, and all stand before his great white throne. There is a great propriety in the divine arrangement, that the same Being that died for the world is to judge the world. Hence Jesus himself tells us: "The sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in Heaven, and all the tribes of the earth shall see him coming with power and with great glory." "He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's glory, and in the glory of the holy angels." There will be a wondrous contrast between his *first* and his *second* coming. Then he came in the humility of a man of sorrows, now he shall come in all the grandeur of his Godhead. Then he came as the servant; now he shall come as the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. Then he came in seeming weakness; now clothed visibly with the might of Omnipotence. Then his blessed brow was encircled with thorns, in mockery of a crown; now it is adorned with an undisputed crown of glory. Then his face was often wet with tears; now before its brightness the sun grows dim. Then he was the despised prisoner; now the mighty conqueror. Then he was arraigned as a criminal; now he is the universal Judge.

And how fit is it that the hand that was nailed to the Cross for us should hold the sceptre of judgment. None can suppose that the Holy One, who so loved sinners as to yield up his life for them, will be unnecessarily severe. It cannot be thought that the gacious Saviour, who died to honor and satisfy justice, will himself be unjust. He who prayed for us in many a lonely spot, and on many a dark night, is to speak the sentence of judgment over us. If we are condemned, then, it can be from no want of tenderness, love, or justice on the part of the Judge, but from the inherent badness of our own case. He who is the Judge was also the Advocate; and if the curse of condemnation comes from his lips, it must be because no other sentence was possible in the eternal fitness of things. Rejecting a Saviour's cleansing blood, they are unfit for heaven, for the society of pure spirits, and there is nothing left for them but the blackness of darkness forever. A Christless soul must sink into hell by the very weight of its own sins.

The day of the Lord's appearing will be a glorious day for those who are found clothed in the pure robe of Christ's righteousness. It is too common, in speaking of the judgment, to picture it as a day of unmixed terror—"a God in grandeur, and a world on fire!" and it is true that to the sinner it will be a day of unspeakable horror; but the believer has nothing to fear, but everything to hope from that day. The pardon he obtained by faith at the mercy seat will then be confirmed by the decisions from the judgment seat. His Brother is his Judge, and therefore he has nothing to fear. He whom he loved above all others now occupies a position above all others, and he will share his glory with his friends. Long ago he prayed—"Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." And now the prayer is to be fully answered, for body and soul re-united and glorified, he says to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Dear Reader, it is certain as your own existenee, certain as the existence of the God with whom you have to do that you must

meet Jesus as your Judge. But how are you to meet him? Shall it be as one who has rejected his offers, and trampled upon his blood, and done despite to his grace? Oh, think of the awful expression—"the wrath of the Lamb!" That wrath will come upon you to the uttermost, and beat upon your exposed soul in one eternal storm! Oh, flee from this wrath to come!

The judgment is not only to be in the hands of Christ, but also the resurrection of the dead. His own triumph over the grave is a pledge of the resurrection of the dead, and he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." While we feel that the soul is the better part of our nature, yet we cannot but feel some anxiety about the soul's earthly temple—that body which is fearfully and wonderfully made. The mother looks down into the cold, damp grave, where her darling babe is laid, and asks with much solicitude, "Shall this precious dust ever be restored to me?" Though Jesus were to save the soul, yet without the resurrection of the body his work would be incomplete. When God made man at first a perfect and sinless being, it was with a united body and soul; and Jesus, in destroying the works of the devil, not only rescues the soul from the power of sin, but the body also from the power of death. If death were allowed to reign forever over the body, Christ's work would not be a finished work. Christ came to deliver us from the curse of the law, which included death spiritually to the soul and death physically to the body. He accomplishes this by giving life to both the soul and body. Believers get from him his own spirit, so that as he lives they shall live also, and he shall give them a body like unto his own glorified body. "When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." But we are told of some who shall rise to the resurrection of condemnation. Ah! my reader! shall it be you? After all your light and privileges, shall that day so blessed to the believer, bring you nothing but *condemnation?*

Dear Reader,—I have thus sought in the preceding pages to make good the title of this book, "NONE BUT CHRIST." My

heart's desire and prayer before God is that He may be all and in all to you. My soul yearns over you in love, and longs to have you complete in Christ. A man, poor in the things of this world, but rich in faith, said, "I have lost all my property; I have lost all my relatives—my last son is dead; I have lost my hearing and my eyesight; I am all alone, old and poor; but it makes no difference—Christ never grows old, Christ never is poor, Christ never dies, and Christ never will forsake me!" The holy and devoted Grimshaw says: "When I die I shall then have my greatest grief and my greatest joy: my greatest grief that I have done so little for Jesus; my greatest joy, that Jesus, has done so much for me. My last words shall be, 'Here goes an unprofitable servant!'" To have such a high appreciation of Christ—to have your soul filled with his presence—"Christ in you the hope of glory," is to be exalted to the highest honor in the universe.

Let it be *none but Christ* in the matter of your justification There never was a more important question presented to the human mind than "How shall a man be just with God?" There have been many answers given to the question, but they are all founded upon "vanity and lies" except one—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Condemned and cursed by the law which we have broken, it is in vain to expect to be saved by it, for "by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified," seeing that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that the law demands absolute and perfect obedience. We cannot be justified by our sorrow for sin, for however deep the sorrow of the criminal for his crime, that does not satisfy the law which he has broken, nor make it relax its hold upon him. We cannot be justified by our good resolutions, and good feelings, and frames of mind, for these still leave our past sins, with their accumulated guilt, pressing upon the conscience and crying to heaven for vengeance. We cannot be justified by our prayers, for petitions, however earnest and however often presented, cannot satisfy the claims of the law upon the criminal. We cannot be justified by the merits or intercessions of our fellow men, for being sinners themselves,

they cannot possibly atone for us. In short, "Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin" for a sinner; and Jesus having shed his blood, and thereby satisfied the utmost claims of the law, the soul that believes in him is "justified from all things," and accepted forever.

Let it be *none but Christ* in the matter of your sanctification. "Christ is made unto us sanctification." He not only pardons the guilt of sin, but gives us the victory over its power. Love to him supplies the only true motive to holiness. Love to Christ makes us hate sin, and leads us to a constant warfare against our inward corruptions. All attempts at holiness of heart and life that do not spring from motives drawn from the Cross invariably end in failure. As the branch of the vine can only bear fruit as long as it abides in the vine, so we can only be fruitful in holiness by abiding in Christ. The more Christ is kept before the mind, the stronger will be our faith; and the stronger our faith, the more ardent will be our love; and the more ardent onr love, the more prompt, cheerful and steady will be our obedience. Our heavenly hope, our Christian zeal, our benevolence, our meekness, our humility, and all the graces of the Spirit, will be vigorous in proportion as we draw all our life from Christ, becoming brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

Let it be *none but Christ* with us in the matter of ordinances. Some lay great stress on ordinances, putting them in His place who instituted them, and who can alone give them any efficacy. What is the Lord's Supper without Christ? A well without water—a body without a soul—an empty ceremony! If his broken body and shed blood is not discerned, but dependence is placed in the outward observance, it becomes perverted to the destruction of the soul. What is Baptism without Christ? An empty and unmeaning form. But when Christ is in it, it is the act of a loving and obedient heart, and a beautiful symbol of the facts of the gospel.

Let it be *none but Christ* in all your religious duties. Your prayers must be presented through the shed blood of Christ, or, like Cain's offering, they will be rejected. Attend upon and

value that preaching most which is full of Christ; for without this, whatever may be the preacher's talent, whatever the splendor of his eloquence or the power of his logic, he must be but a blind leader of the blind. In attending prayer meetings, let it be to meet with Christ. His presence is promised; and where the King is, there is his court. If you go to meet with Christ, you will not be disappointed; if you go from any other motives, leanness will come upon your soul. When you labor for souls, let it be with Christ's Spirit and under his high commission. When you contribute for the support of the gospel, let it be not as conferring a favor upon Christ, but as esteeming it a great honor to do anything for Him who, though rich, yet for your sake became poor. Let all your duties, whether public or private, be steeped in evangelical motives, and performed as under His eye who went about constantly doing good.

Let it be *none but Christ* in thinking of your future home. It is he who has prepared that happy place for you, and his presence there will form its chief attraction. "I had rather depart and be *with Christ*, which is far better." To get a crown from his hand and a welcome from his lips will be unspeakable glory. In short, for sickness or for health, for prosperity or adversity, for life or death, for time or eternity, let your constant motto be—

"NONE BUT CHRIST."

# PART III.

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## GLAD TIDINGS;

OR

## Believe and Live.

# GLAD TIDINGS.

## CHAPTER I.

### GOOD TIDINGS.

THERE is much misunderstanding in the minds of many in regard to the word "Gospel." Some think of everything they hear preached from the Bible under this general appellation. Whether the minister be preaching on the being of a God, the immortality of the soul, or on the moral duties which arise from our social relationships, it is all, by such persons, called preaching the Gospel. Some time ago we heard a minister preach on the subject of prayer. It was a faithful and powerful sermon. It lifted the soul up to God, and made many a hearer say, "It is good to be here." At the close of the services we heard one of the hearers say to another, "That was a fine Gospel sermon." Now, the fact is, there was not one word of Gospel in it. A man may preach a whole year, or for that part, a whole lifetime, and preach truth, too, and yet not preach the Gospel.

The celebrated Andrew Fuller once heard a young brother preach a sermon which might be called eloquent and learned. When the preacher came down from the pulpit, Fuller laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said, "I thank you for your sermon; it was very good, *as far as it went.*" "As far as it went!" said the preacher. "Yes," said Fuller, "as far as it went, for Christ was not preached." "But Christ was not in

the Text," replied the young man. "My brother," said Fuller, "there are no by-lanes in this country which do not lead up to the King's highway." All the lines of truth centre in Jesus, and that is a poor dry morsel of a sermon that does not contain enough of the Gospel, to lead any inquiring soul present to pardon and peace. We greatly admire the sentiment of one of the ancient Fathers—"Were the highest heavens my pulpit, and the whole hosts of the redeemed my audience, and eternity my day, Jesus alone would be my text."

The Gospel means "good news," and is a proclamation from the God of heaven to his guilty creatures on earth, that for the sake of what Jesus has done, he will pardon all who trust in his faithful work, and receive them as welcomely as if they had never sinned at all. It comes to tell of a way by which we can come to God as joyfully as Adam could before he fell. God's Fatherly voice sounds to us from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The good news is in that sentence. Observe, the voice from heaven did not say, *with* whom I am well pleased, though that is true. Neither does it say *for* whom I am well pleased, though that is also true. But it says *in* whom I am well pleased. It is only when we see God in Christ Jesus that we can see a well-pleased God. In that *one sentence*, God himself preached the Gospel to that awe-struck throng which stood upon the banks of Jordan; and through them to all the ends of the earth.

If we approach God out of Christ, he is a consuming fire. Let the best man that ever lived come before God with the best action he ever performed, and out of Christ God cannot be well pleased with him. His best performances are in God's pure eyes corrupted to the very core by sin. But let the vilest sinner come to God in Christ, and there is lifted up upon him a reconciled countenance, the smile of approval beams upon his soul with the very joy of heaven, and lifting up his eyes to the face of the Judge, he exclaims, "Abba, Father." Indeed a holy and a just God could bestow upon guilty man no favor, either temporal or spiritual, except through the worthiness of His Son.

A person once said, "How am I to know that Jesus died for me?" The reply was, "Do you acknowledge that you have been all your life a sinner?" "I do." "And do you believe that the desert of sin is the wrath and curse of God?" "Yes." "Why, then, is it that you have been all your life long getting nothing from God's hand but blessings?" This inquirer saw at once that the very sparing forbearance of God that had permitted him to live, and the goodness of God that strewed his pathway with blessings, could only come to him through the death of Jesus.

Suppose, my reader, that a friend comes into your house today and says, "I have good news for you;" you would understand by that, that he had something to tell you that would make you happy. And if after he has made his statement you are not any happier than before, one of two things must be the case,—either your friend was mistaken as to the nature of the intelligence, and it was not calculated to make you happy; or else you *did not believe* what he said. Now, when God sends the Gospel to us he says it is good news, that is, something intended to make us happy; and if after we have heard it we are not made happy by it, either God calls that good news which is not so, or we have not believed his word. Yes, the only reason why you, my reader, are not now rejoicing in the forgiving love of God, is that you have not believed his testimony concerning his Son. You can believe your fellowmen when they say they have good news for you; you can take up the newspaper, with a face beaming with expectation, when you are told there is good news for you in it; and yet your neglected Bible lies in your houses containing something calculated and intended to make you unspeakably happy; and you will not believe it.

O, it is matter of vastest difficulty to get men to believe that the whole work of their salvation is finished already! They will acknowledge that the favor of God is a precious thing; they will speak of making their peace with God; and hope that he will be reconciled to them. But tell them of a love that has already made the peace; tell them of a grace that has already finished the salvation; tell them of a goodness so abundant

and overflowing that it has absolutely left them nothing to do but to believe that all is done,—and you seem to them as one who mocks. Whenever they think of becoming serious, of cultivating good feelings, of breaking off their outward sins, and of prayer, they think of things that are to qualify them for coming to Jesus, and that will make God pleased with them; forgetting that until they go to Jesus through faith, and come to God for acceptance through the righteousness of his Son, they have not taken the very *first step* in true religion.

Self-righteousness, in some form or other, is the universal sin of man. Wherever man is found to exist, it reigns supreme in the unrenewed heart. The moment the sinner begins to think or speak on religion, this evil shows itself. With the light of the Gospel blazing around him, with Calvary's solemn scenes portrayed in blood before him, he yet feels as if he must be accepted by God on the ground of some good prayer, some good feelings, or some good deeds performed by himself. Now, the best obedience that man can render in his fallen state is imperfect. And an imperfect obedience is just a sinful obedience—a wicked obedience. Now, if God were to accept men on the ground of such obedience, it would be virtually declaring that his law had been too strict—had been wrong. From that moment his holy law would be impeached, would lose its power among all intelligent beings, and its holy authority would be forever gone.

Let the sinner start for heaven on the ground of his own imperfect righteousness, and he can only get there by trampling, at every step, upon the holy law of the God of heaven. And allowing him at last to get there on the ground of his own imperfect obedience, his presence would strike terror into every holy heart in heaven. The songs of that holy place would die away in groans. Its inhabitants would feel that all protection was gone, all confidence gone—if God's perfect law was gone. How, then, can the sinner hope for salvation in a way that would swallow up heaven itself in the misery of hell.

Were God to accept the sinner on the ground of his own righteousness, it would be declaring the death of his own Son

unnecessary. It would be saying that it had been in vain that the blood of Jesus was shed. It would be to declare the atonement a piece of folly—nay, of absolute wickedness. The very fact that God's own Son had to die, shows that nothing but a perfect righteousness would do, a righteousness so perfect that God's pure eye cannot see a single flaw in it. It shows that we needed a righteousness no less than Divine, and here it is provided in Christ crucified. Sinner! abandon at once the vain attempt to make a covering for yourself, by patching together the fig-leaves of your own works; for to you in God's great name we proclaim the Gospel's joyful sound—a righteousness unto all, and upon all, who believe.

My dear reader, if you are ever saved at all, you must be saved by simple faith in Christ's work. We know that the natural heart hates this doctrine, and that it contradicts all man's preconceived notions of religion. It lays pride in the dust and leaves the soul no room for boasting. Take the holiest man now living, and the vilest sinner that treads God's earth, and it is faith in the merits of Jesus that has made the difference.

Suppose we had been in the city of Philippi that night when the jailor was converted. It is the dark, midnight hour, and the city is wrapped in silence and gloom. We stand opposite to a gloomy-looking building, and as we gaze upon it through the darkness, it begins to heave to and fro, as if rocked in the grasp of an earthquake. Hark! A voice of deep human agony breaks upon our ear. It is the voice of the jailor himself, smitten by the bolt of divine truth, and his words are, "What shall I do to be saved?" And what are the directions which the Apostles give him? Do they tell him he must pray, that he must get deeper feeling, more convictions of his sinful state, and do something to prepare himself for coming to Jesus? No such directions do we find coming from the lips of these heaven-inspired men; though, alas! there are not wanting in our day professed ministers of the Gospel who would give just such instruction.

An inquirer was urged some time ago to go to the Lord's Supper, by a minister. "How can I, when I have no hope in Christ?"

was the reply. "O come to the communion, and you will feel better," said the minister. How beautifully do the Apostle's words contrast with this. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And what did the jailor do? Did he say, "That is too easy a way of being saved: it is not possible that so vile a man as I am could be saved in that way"? No! at once he believed in the Son of God as *his* Saviour, and his heart was brimming over with joy. An old writer says there are but three steps to heaven—"out of self, into Christ, and into glory." If you are out of Christ, whatever may be the outward morality of your conduct, you are condemned already—living under the curse of the law, and the bolt of God's wrath may at any moment strike you. There is but one safe spot for you in the whole universe, and that is as a humble believer at the cross of Christ.

## CHAPTER II.

### IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

These words came from the lips of the Lord Jesus, and there are no words like his words. They burn into the soul for they are words of heavenly fire. Words of wisdom have been spoken by Christ's people, for the brightest intellects and the most powerful eloquence have been devoted to his service; but "never man spake like this man." Something of God, it is true, we can learn from his works; and as we gaze upon the lofty over-hanging cliff, the sky-piercing mountain, or the vast ocean, we are penetrated with feelings of profoundest awe; we exclaim, "Great and Infinite God!" and the cry is taken up in the heavens, and is re-echoed from world to world throughout infinite space.

But nature, in all her vastness, says not one word on what, as sinners, we most want to hear—PARDON. Not a whisper of forgiveness comes to us from the blue heavens above us, nor from any of the works of God around us. The thought of the great God, girt with omnipotence, makes us afraid. The great, infinite, all-pervading Spirit we cannot comprehend. The thought of going into his presence repels rather than attracts.—"I remembered God and was troubled."

But when God comes near to us in human flesh, when God approaches me in the person of a man like myself, when I hear God speaking to me through human lips, looking kindly upon me through human eyes, dropping over my wretchedness human tears, and heaving over me human groans, as he speaks to me of love, of pardon, and of adoption into his family of love, the guilty dread of God flees away, and perfect love, that casteth out all fear, takes its place. Now this is what we see in the God-man—"God manifest in the flesh."

Suppose that you were to enter a friend's house, and see his

little children amusing themselves with that perfect enjoyment of the present peculiar to childhood; not a cloud upon their fair brows, not a shade of sorrow upon their faces. You are standing and admiring the lovely scene, when, all at once, the father of these children is heard at the door, and in a moment the whole scene is changed. The children look around in terror; the faces so lately flushed with joy are now pale with fear, and they each make haste to hide themselves from the father as from an object of aversion and dread. Now, in witnessing such a sight as this, you would know that one of two things must be the case: either that father is a tyrant, and is in the habit of abusing his children, or else these children are conscious of having done wrong in his absence, and, therefore, are afraid to face him.

Why has the sinner that dread of God which makes him shun the very thought of his Creator, as the essence of all that is gloomy and forbidding? Why does he dread the idea of going into God's presence, and coming so near the universal Father as death brings men? It cannot be because God has ever done him any wrong, for the hand that he dreads has been engaged in scattering mercies upon his pathway, and every gesture of that hand has been inviting him near. The voice he dreads to hear has been tuned to accents of love, and has sounded after him down the broad road to death—"Turn ye, turn ye,—why will ye die?" Why, then, this slavish dread at the thought of God? Why this enmity and aversion? Ah! it is because the soul is conscious of guilt, and of having wickedly lifted the standard of rebellion against its best friend. It is because this consciousness of guilt makes him think of God as a God of wrath, the red thunderbolt of whose indignation is about to leap from his right hand for the sinner's destruction.

Now, man can neither love God nor enjoy happiness till this feeling is destroyed, and till entire confidence in Jehovah's love is restored. We see these remarks illustrated in our first parents. As long as they believed in God's love, they remained holy and happy; the moment they believed Satan's lie, who taught them that God was selfish,—that he was keeping some-

thing back from them that was really good for them, and the reason why this good was kept back was lest they should come to know as much as himself,—the very moment they believed this falsehood, they fell, and guilty dread of God took the place of confidence and love.

The very beings who but a few moments before were sending up their songs of love and joy, and forming no unhappy harmony with the loftier songs of heaven, are now in terror fleeing from the sound of the Lord's voice, and trying to hide themselves among the trees of the garden. Why is Adam now so unhappy? As yet there is no change in his outward surroundings. The fruits are as pleasant to the taste, the flowers are as fragrant to the smell, the air as balmy, and the music of the birds as sweet as ever. His body is yet in paradise, but in his soul have begun the very elements of hell—a plain proof that no outward possessions can make man happy while his soul is estranged from the fountain of all good.

In "Immanuel, God with us," we see Satan's lie fully refuted. We see the God we supposed was full of vindictive wrath, coming near to us in human flesh, with the tear of pity in his eye and words of inviting love upon his lips. We see that God *so* loved us, that he stepped from his throne at the very summit of glory, and sought for us on the mountains of sin. We see that we do not need to do anything to make God love us, for that love has existed all along; that we do not need to do something to reconcile God to us, for whoever was in the wrong must come and be reconciled to the right; hence God is in Christ reconciling *not himself to the world*, but *the world to himself*.

In short, we see that as man departed from God by believing Satan's lie, and disbelieving God's truth, so he must return by disbelieving Satan's lie, and believing God's truth. And as he lost his happiness when he lost his confidence in God's disinterested love, so he can never regain his happiness till he believes in that love as displayed in Christ Jesus. Hence it is written, "*Acquaint* thyself with God and be at peace with him." And again, "They that *know* Thee shall put their trust in Thee." That is, the moment they really *know God*, as he is re-

vealed in the Gospel, that moment they are at peace with Him. But a man may know about God, and yet not know God. He may be a profound theologian, and be able to discourse eloquently upon the attributes of God, and yet in the true spiritual sense know no more of him than a Hottentot. To know God is to know him as my forgiving Father, and this I can only know through Jesus Christ His Son.

In the light of these remarks, how important does the doctrine of Christ's divinity appear! Take away that truth out of the Bible, and you shatter to pieces humanity's life-boat, and leave man a miserable wreck upon the shores of eternity. This is the keystone of that bridge that crosses the gulf of human despair, and let it be taken away and the whole fabric falls to pieces. This is the most dangerous error that has ever cursed our world, for it strikes at the root of the atonement, the only hope of man. Hence, when Infidels would destroy Christianity under the most plausible form, they have begun by denying the divinity of Christ. If some being vested with great power wished to destroy our solar system, it would not be necessary to go from orb to orb, destroying one after another: it would only be necessary to dash out the sun, and the whole would rush wildly into one mass of ruin. So men wishing to be called Christians, have taken away our Lord's divinity, and thus removed the life and power of the whole Christian system. But they cannot impose upon the pious soul, the dead body for the living form. When they talk of Christ, it is not the Christ of the Bible they speak of, but a Christ formed in their own vain imaginations; and however much they may extol him as a good and, virtuous man, the believer says, "Ye have taken away my Lord, and I know not where ye have laid him."

Sinner! In the tears and sufferings of the God-man, see how great must be your danger. The tears of Jesus over your perishing state, and the deep anxieties of his soul for your salvation, show how fearful is your peril. You are out in a steamboat upon the lake, enjoying a pleasure excursion, on a lovely summer day. There is not a cloud in the sky, nor a ripple upon the waters. The calm bosom of the lake reflects

all that is bright and beautiful in the firmament above. The thought of danger never crosses your mind, and you are sinking down into sweet enjoyment of the whole scene, when suddenly you see the captain rush across the deck with tears rolling down his cheeks, and much excited; you also see the crew deeply affected, and you would at once begin to think there must be danger, though you could not see it.

'Now, when we see God in human form weeping and bleeding for sinners, there must be some fearful peril—there must be some deep damnation, on the brink of which your soul is toppling! O, at once go to the Captain of our Salvation, and cry, "Lord save, or I perish!"—and that hand that bears the print of the nail, and yet is the hand that guides the stars in their courses, will pluck you from destruction, and give you a place among his loved ones on earth, and at last among his redeemed ones in heaven. But remember that the same hand that is strong to save is also strong to smite. The feet of those who have carried others to their burial, may be at the door to entomb you. The shuttle may have passed the loom and have woven the last garment in which your cold corpse is to be enshrouded, and this night your soul may stand before God. Dear reader, would you dare to stand there in a Christless state? As a consuming fire would that holy presence be to your guilty soul.

## CHAPTER III.

### SINAI AND CALVARY.

"He that believeth not is condemned already."

It is not necessary for the man out of Christ to wait till the day of his death, or the day of Judgment, to be condemned, for *now* he is under the curse of the law; and the curse of the law is the curse of God. Go where he will, do what he may, that curse is upon him. He may banish the remembrance of it from his thoughts; he may plunge into scenes of gay and fashionable resort; he may engross his mind with the cares and perplexities of business; he may roam amid the fields of literature and art, and expand his intellect amid the wonderful revelations of science; but employ himself as he may, the sentence of death has gone forth against him; and the execution of that sentence is only suspended to afford him an opportunity of going to Christ for pardon and eternal life.

When he lies upon his bed at night that curse surrounds it like a curtain; when he walks by the way it is his attendant; and when he laughs in the theatre, or in the bar-room, or at the festive board, that tremendous curse frowns in wrath over his head. The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* that are written in the book of the law, to do them." Now, dear reader, if you can show that since the moment that you became a responsible being to the present time, you have never sinned in thought, word, or deed; that you have loved God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself, during the whole of your life,—then you are not under the curse, but can claim eternal life as a right, according to the terms of the law: "Do and live." Your conscience testifies, however that you have not thus lived a perfectly holy life, and the want of this perfect holiness brings upon you the curse of which we have spoken.

No man will ever go to Christ for a blessing till he feels himself burdened with this curse. The hoarse, stern voice of justice, must be heard from Sinai, pronouncing our condemnation, before we will listen to the "still small voice" of love from Calvary, declaring our justification. It is in vain that you press food upon a man who is not hungry, or offer alms to one who thinks himself rich and increased in goods. So, till the soul feels its lost and undone condition, there will be no music in the name Jesus, and no attraction in Calvary. The sinner must be made to feel that God cannot permit his law to be trampled upon with impunity, and that sin is the most fearful thing in the whole universe; for if it is pardoned, it can only be blotted out through the untold sufferings of God's own Son,—if unpardoned, it must be followed by an eternity of woe.

A German Prince, upon visiting France went to see the place where many convicts were confined. In compliment to his rank, he was permitted to signalize his visit by giving one of the convicts his liberty. He spoke to one man, whose intelligent look attracted his notice, and asked him for what crime he was suffering. In reply the convict began to tell him the most unlikely story of his innocence, and of how false witnesses swore against him. The Prince left him and put the same question to another, who also denied his guilt, and averred that he was mistaken for another man. The same question was put to several others, and with the same result; till at last he came to a man whose solemn and melancholy cast of countenance attracted his notice. The man's reply was, "I have been a vile wretch, and have deserved far more than my present punishment. I have set at open defiance the laws both of God and men, and am not fit to look upon God's blue heavens or the green earth." The Prince, turning to his attendants, said, "Set this man free; he is in a fit state of mind to make a proper use of his liberty."

It is thus that the Prince of Peace receives and pardons the sinner, when he is in a state of mind that justifies God and condemns himself. When the pride of the soul is subdued, then the sinner ceases to look at himself in the mirror of the world's notions and maxims about human nature, which makes the

most deformed look comely in their own eyes; but he now looks at himself in the mirror of God's law, and the result is, he sees himself in some measure as God sees him; and "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes."

We have an illustration of the truth of these remarks in the religious history of the Apostle Paul. He says, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He stood high in his own estimation. He thought himself in high favor with God—as good as any of his acquaintances, and better than most. He tells us that the reason of this good opinion of himself was, that he was "without the law." This does not mean that he was without the *knowledge* of the law, for, doubtless, from a child he could repeat the law of God correctly.

But it means that he was ignorant of the far-reaching spirituality of God's law, extending as it does to the thoughts and feelings of the heart. He could point to one commandment after another, and proudly say, "I have never broken any of them," and so far as the outward act is concerned, this was doubtless true; but he forgot that the revengeful thought is murder, that the covetous thought is theft, and that the unchaste thought is adultery; he forgot that it is in vain that we go through a heartless round of religious ceremonies, if love to God is not the grand motive power that governs our lives. Hence, when the spirituality of the law flashed upon his mind, in the light of a new conviction, and, to use his own words, "the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," then the sins of his whole life appeared before him, unpardoned, black in their aggravations, and loudly calling for God's wrath upon his head. His hope perished; his delusion was torn away; the fabric that he had built upon the sand lay around him, a pile of ruins. Sin seemed "*exceeding* sinful."

Like a man who supposed himself rich and increased with goods, and who, with much self-complacency, put his hand into his pocket to pull out his well-filled purse, and instead, put his fingers upon the slimy folds of a loathsome serpent that lies there. With what loathing and disappointment would he draw

back his hand! Like a man who supposes himself well dressed, and is on the way to attend a gay and fashionable party, but when he enters the well-lighted room, and when the scrutiny of a hundred eyes is on him, he looks upon himself, and finds that he is covered with "filthy rags."—With what shame and confusion would he shrink away! Thus it was with Paul when he saw the purity of God's law, and felt himself the subject of its terrible curse. When he was thus emptied of self, he was in a state to be filled with Christ; and when his false hope went out in darkness, the hope in Jesus, "that maketh not ashamed," arose in imperishable splendor upon his soul. In his own words, "the law was a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ."

We see, then, that the reason why there are so many who are boasting of their morality and wrapping themselves up in a self-righteous security is because they measure themselves by a false standard of their own making. And until they can be induced to abandon that false measure, and try themselves by the perfect purity of God's law, the cross of Christ will appear to them foolishness, and those truths that fill all heaven with rapture will fall upon their ears as the whistling of the empty wind.

Here is a man, for example, who thinks that all God requires of him is to live a strictly moral life. To be honest in his dealings with his fellowmen, to be kind and benevolent to the suffering and the destitute, to be a good citizen, and discharge with fidelity the relative duties of life—this is his standard of duty, and he comes up to it. He *is* an honest man. He *is* a kind neighbor, a good husband, an affectionate father. He has a great respect for religion and for its ministers. He goes regularly to the house of God, and contributes liberally to the support of the Gospel. In short, he comes up, in every respect, to his own standard of what a Christian should be, and the result is, he is at peace. No disturbing doubt alarms him. He is "alive without the law."

Such a man can never be converted, can never repent and believe in Christ, till he is induced to measure himself by a different standard. Such a man may like to hear the most faithful preaching, because he is persuaded that it does not mean *him*. And men like to hear the condemnation of things that they never will take home to themselves. They like to hear God's threat-

enings spoken in a way that never touches their consciences. They like practical preaching that does not rebuke them. Some years ago I met a man whose case may illustrate the above remarks. In the course of some conversation on religious subjects, I asked him if he was a Christian. He seemed astonished at the question, but promptly replied that he was. I then asked him how long it was since the great change had taken place. He replied that his parents had been good Christian people; that in his infancy he had been baptized into the true church; that he regularly received the sacrament from the hands of the minister; and that he did not know what I meant by *the great change*. I told him that though it was a great privilege to be born of pious parents, yet the religion of heaven was not hereditary—not a thing that ran in the blood; that as to his belonging to the true church, that could not save him, for Judas outwardly belonged to the true church, and yet went to hell; that his baptism could not save him, for Simon was baptized by the hands of an inspired Apostle, and yet "had neither part nor lot in this matter." I read the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, and urged upon him the necessity of a change of heart.

He now became very solemn, said he knew that he had not attended to these things as he ought, but that of late he had become a changed character; that for the last few weeks he had read three chapters out of the Bible, and prayed three times every day; and, if that was not religion, he did not know what it was. I tried to show him the purity and far-reaching nature of God's law; that as a sinner the curse of the law was upon him; and that, though he could begin from that moment and live a perperfectly holy life till the moment of his death, even then he could not be saved, for his past sins, in all their condemning power, would still be against him. I tried to lead him to Calvary for salvation. Pointing him to a *finished work* that his own *good works*, and *prayers*, and *tears* could add nothing to, I told him that at that moment there was nothing between him and pardon but his own *unbelief*. He was urged to believe that Jesus died for *him* as if he had been the only sinner in the world. He received the testimony of God, and was soon able to say with Paul, "He loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SPIRIT STRIVING.

A thoughtless sinner! It is hard to conceive of a more melancholy sight. With the certainty of soon standing in the presence of a holy God; with innumerable sins staining his soul, not one of which he can wash away; with a soul more valuable than he has even imagination to conceive of, and that must be suffering or enjoying, when suns and systems shall have gone to the general pile of ruin; with responsibilities under which an angel might tremble,—there he is, utterly careless.

The Great God has taken such a deep interest in his welfare, that for a time he emptied heaven of the most lovely object in it, and sent his Son on a mission of love to the perishing millions of our race. The Son so loved him, that he endured the agonies of the cross, and refused to come down till he had finished the work of human redemption. The Holy Spirit feels such an interest in him, that, though hating his sins with a perfect hatred, He still follows him with the importunities of love. The holy angels take such an interest in him that they watch for his repentance; and yet, there he is, careless about himself!

But when the sinner begins to *think*,—to look eternity and all its awful realities in the face,—his case is truly hopeful. See that young man taken out of a river, supposed to be drowned. The physician is using every means to restore animation. The mother of that youth hangs over him in an agony of suspense; and when at last there is seen the first movements of returning life, the fluttering of the heart, the quivering of the eyelids, and the heaving of the deep groan, I see that mother clasp her hands, and, turning her tearful eyes to heaven, she cries, "Thank God, he lives."

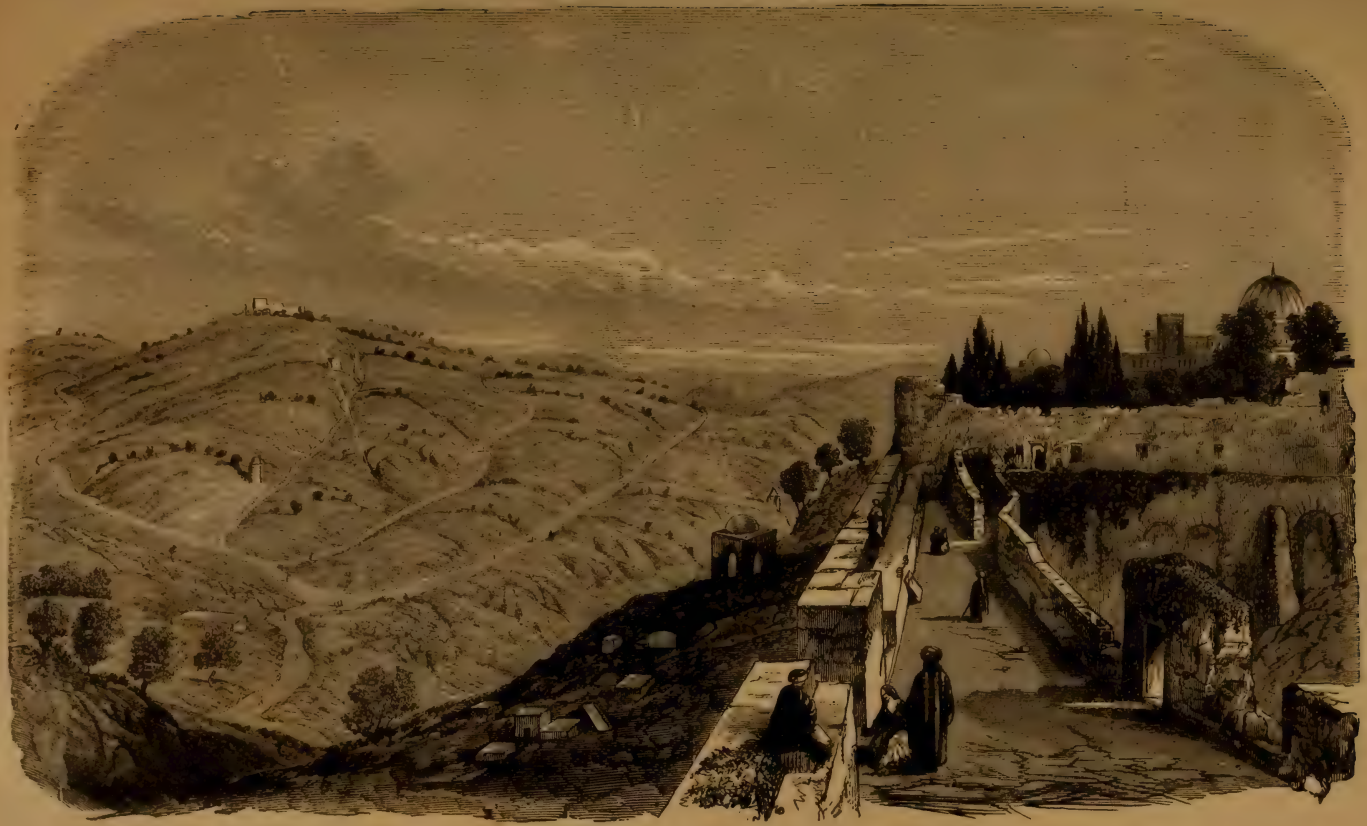
Sinner, the Book of God describes you as dead in "trespasses and sins," and this is true, not only of the most abandoned sin-

ners, but of the most amiable and moral. Death appears in different forms, sometimes horrid and revolting, and sometimes lovely and attractive. Go over the battle field, after the conflict is over, and you will see death in some of its most revolting forms; but look upon that babe on its mother's knee, upon whose lovely countenance death has just stamped his seal, and death is seen there in a most attractive aspect; but the man slain in battle and the babe are both alike dead.

And it is the Holy Spirit alone that can speak life into the dead soul. We might gather around one sinner all the faithful ministers of the Gospel now living, and all the praying people who hold up their arms by their fervent supplications; and they might try by their prayers and exhortations to save the soul of that one sinner and continue their efforts for years, and they could not produce one good thought, nor one saving impression, without the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Dear reader, if this Divine Agent has indeed begun to operate upon your soul, and to produce some signs of spiritual life, it is with you a very solemn and critical period. You cannot remain long in this state, for either you will allow the Spirit to lead you to the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace, or you will resist him, and sink back into a state of more hardened obduracy. A crisis—a turning point in the history of your soul—has come when it will be easier for you to become a Christian, than it ever was before, or, perhaps, than it ever will be again.

The Spirit has startled your soul from its long and death-like torpor. The people of God are praying for you, and trying to point you to the Lamb of God. The word preached from the pulpit sounds to you now as it never did before; pointed, personal, and solemn as the blast of the last trumpet, it reaches your trembling heart with an awakening, "Thou art the man!" Memory is turning over the pages of your past life, and the sins you have committed, the prayers and counsels of a pious mother that you have despised, the Sabbaths you have squandered,—all are speaking to you in words of rebuke that are heard through every chamber of the soul. Oh! now is the most favorable time you will ever have to accept the offers of the Gospel!



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

But resist the Spirit, and your mind will become dark as perdition on the things of God, and the things that belong to your personal salvation will be regarded with a sullen indifference. God will say, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone;" and of all the calamities that can happen to the soul on this side of perdition, to be let alone is the most terrible.

When the benevolent monks who reside on the Alps go out amid the snow storm to search for travelers who, overcome by fatigue and cold, have sunk down to perish, they always know when they come to a person whose case is hopeless, from the fact that he is very hard to awake, and when they do get him partially aroused, he is very *angry* at being disturbed, and insists on being allowed to remain where he is. So is it with those Gospel-hardened sinners who have long resisted the Spirit, and whose souls are bound up in the chains of a mighty lethargy. When a revival sweeps through a whole community, and enters the very house where such a man lives, he slumbers on in indifference, or else becomes a deadly opposer. He even glories in his shame, and boasts of *how calm* he can keep amid the general excitement.

But the calm he boasts of is like that fearful calm we sometimes see in nature, when a storm is brewing in the heavens, and is about to break forth in desolating power. It is the calm which the sick man feels, when the inflammation that tortures his body has turned into mortification. He thinks himself better, his friends congratulate him on his improvement; but the physician looks gloomy, for he knows that soon his heart will be struggling wildly under the attack of death. So the sinner has resisted the Spirit, till his convictions have all left him, and he cries, "peace and safety," when destruction is thundering at his door.

The great sin that the Spirit comes to convince of, is the sin of UNBELIEF. The Lord's own words are, "When he is come, he shall reprove the world of sin; of sin, because they believe not in me." It was not enough that Jesus died for the guilty, and made salvation free as the air we breathe, or as the mountain torrent, leaping from rock to rock, for such is the deep de-

pravity of the human heart, that not one of the whole race would have believed in this boundless love, did not the Holy Spirit come to convince of unbelief. I know of nothing that shows more clearly the extent of our undone and lost state by nature than this,—that it needed not only God in our nature to die for us, but it needs God the Spirit, to convince us that we need such a Saviour at all.

The proper definition of unbelief, as given by the Bible, is truly fearful. It is there described as making God a liar. Reader, suppose that you were to have your veracity doubted by all around you, day after day; that your family, your neighbors, the persons with whom you do business every day, all were to turn away from your words as unworthy of belief,—how bitterly would you feel! What indignation would fill your heart! And how must the Great God feel, when the very creatures for whom he has done so much—for whom he has made infinite sacrifices—refuse to credit his words, and cast them back in his face with contempt! Is it any wonder that the unalterable decree has gone forth from the Eternal Throne, "He that believeth not shall be damned"?

But it is not often that unbelief will, in words, contradict God. Occasionally some bold blasphemer may dare to do this, but, generally, the unbelief of the heart will assume a more pious, and, therefore, a *more dangerous* form. As Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, so the sin of unbelief will often come in the garb of the most profound humility. It will say, "I am too great a sinner for Christ to pardon me." This is a sham humility, and has its origin in an "evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God."

Suppose that the Mayor of this city were to issue a proclamation, calling upon *all* the destitute poor of the place, to come to his office, and they would get bread freely, "without money and without price." But, suppose, on that very day, in passing along the street, that I see a man weeping bitterly, who, upon my asking him the cause of his distress, informs me he is in a starving state. I point him to the proclamation, and show him the office where he can get immediate relief. But he says, "I

am too hungry to get anything; the proclamation cannot mean those who are so hungry as I am!" Why, we would think the man was mad if we heard him speak in this style. We would tell him that his hunger and destitution formed his only qualification for coming.

And this is what the Spirit seeks to impress upon the mind of the awakened sinner. He tells him that his sins, which he is making a reason for staying away from Christ, are his only qualifications for coming to him. An awakened sinner was once bewailing his sins in the presence of Lady Huntington, and at last, in the bitterness of his soul, cried out, "I am lost." "I am glad to hear it," said the pious lady. "What," said he, "glad to hear that I am lost?" "Yes," was the reply, "for Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost." The Holy Spirit took that word and applied it to his heart; he saw that the cause of his despondency was unbelief; and he there and then received Christ by faith, "and went on his way rejoicing."

Another reason why the Spirit seeks to convince of unbelief is that this is the damning sin, and the cause of every other sin. Why is this man a swearer, a drunkard, a Sabbath-breaker, or an open transgressor of the law of God? It is because he has not believed with the heart on the Son of God. The moment the soul so believes, "faith works by love, and purifies the heart." The Spirit of God does not seek to induce the sinner to cut off this outward sin, and another outward sin, leaving the great root of all sin in the heart untouched.

This would be like a man who wanted to cut down a tree, and would begin with his knife at the top branches, and so work his way down, instead of laying the axe to the root of the tree at once. The Spirit lays the axe of Christ's truth to the root of the tree of unbelief, and at once the man becomes "a new creature in Christ Jesus." The principle of love to him who died for him, becomes the controlling and impelling motive. He works, not *for* life, but because he *has* life. Heaven is not merely *before* him, it is *within* him.

Remember, then, my reader, that, whatever may be your convictions and your terrors,—whatever may be the number of your

prayers, tears, and good resolutions,—until you come to Jesus, and cast yourself wholly on him, you are resisting the Spirit, you are in a state of unbelief, and exposed, at any moment, to be called into the presence of that God, who has pronounced such a fearful sentence against this sin.

"Dwell, Spirit, in our hearts,
Our minds from bondage free;
Then shall we know, and praise, and love
The Father, Son, and Thee."

## CHAPTER V.

### SAVING FAITH.

Faith in Jesus is essential to eternal life. There are many important truths in the Bible that a man can be saved without knowing. He may get to heaven without being a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or a Baptist, but heaven's gates will be forever barred against him, if he dies without faith in Jesus. This is not *a* way of being saved, it is *the* way. All that makes heaven happy, all that makes hell miserable, depends on our reception or rejection of this truth.

A man may say he will have nothing to do with this truth, but it will have something to do with him. He may assume the position of a proud neutrality, but Jesus declares such neutrality impossible. "He that is not with me is against me." The death of Jesus throws the soul of man, in spite of himself, upon a new probation. It is his only hope, his only way of escape from the ruin in which he is involved. The Gospel meets him as he lands upon the shores of time, and it must prove to him "the Saviour of life or of death." It will leave him amid the unsullied brightness of heaven, or amid the hopeless misery of the lost.

In the Bible things are made plain just in proportion as they are of vital importance. Things deeply mysterious and hard be understood, are to be found in that holy Book; but the plan of salvation is not one of them. Indeed, it is so simple and plain, that thousands are stumbling to hell over its very simplicity. Instead of believing in the death of the Son of God, as a ground of justification and eternal life, they are looking for some mysterious influence to come down from heaven, operating upon them like an electrical shock, and filling them with unspeakable rapture. They are waiting for some wonderful light to break in upon their dark minds, and some mysterious voice to tell them that they are forgiven.

Now faith in Jesus is, not merely to believe that he is the Son of God; that he has died to save sinners; that he has made a perfect atonement for the guilty; that he is able and willing to save all who come unto him; and that there is efficiency in his blood to cleanse from all sin. A man may believe all this, just as the devil believes it all, and yet remain unsaved. It may only be the assent of the intellect to perceived truth. The mind may be convinced of the creditability of God's testimony, and yet that testimony exert no saving influence on the heart.

But when a man really comes to Jesus, he casts himself upon his merits as a poor, lost, undone sinner; conscious that he can do nothing to save himself, or to improve his condition before him; and trusting wholly to his work on the cross for his acceptance with the Father. True faith makes a close, personal matter of the death of Jesus. It says, "He died not only for sinners but for *me*, the chief of sinners." It says, "In myself I am nothing, but Jesus died for my sins; and through his righteousness I know I am accepted." It takes God at his word. It sets before its eyes the awful scene on Calvary, the sinking head, the gushing blood, the open wounds, the dying words of the Son of God; and it remembers that with that Son and his work the Father is well pleased, and through his finished work can be "just and yet the justifier of the ungodly."

The man who thus believes in Jesus, *knows* he is forgiven; not because he has been told it in a dream, nor because it has been whispered to his soul by some mysterious voice, nor flashed upon his mind by some sudden impression; but simply because God says it. To trust to my own impressions and feelings and emotions is sheer fanaticism; but to trust to the testimony of God concerning his Son, is highly rational. It is to be able to give a *reason* of the hope that is in us. And surely there can be no firmer foundation upon which an immortal soul can rest its hopes than the word of that God who cannot lie.

Suppose you had offended some dear friend by your bad conduct, and that the sense of that friend's displeasure had become very grievous to you—a burden you could no longer bear. At last you go to that friend, confess your fault and ask

his forgiveness; and he says, 'I freely forgive you." In this case, how could you know you were really forgiven? How could you have an assurance that he was no longer displeased with you? Would it be by waiting for some inward impression, or some outward voice or some startling light? No: it would be by simply believing your friend's word.

So it is with faith in Jesus: it rests entirely upon the merits of Christ's precious blood, and knows that pardon has been bestowed, because God has said, "He that believeth shall be saved." No angel has come from heaven to tell him that his sins have been blotted out, and that his name is now entered in the Lamb's book of life; but he rests upon a testimony better than that of all the angels in heaven, even the testimony of the "Faithful true Witness." "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." We know what it is to put our name and seal to a written document. It is to ratify it, and declare our determination to abide by its contents. So faith rests sweetly upon the work of Christ and upon the word of God, and knows that there is to be found peace and assurance forever.

The great mistake that many make when inquiring after salvation, is, to refuse to come *as they are* to Jesus. They think that they must wait for deeper conviction, for more feeling, for more love to Christ before they can come to him. Hence they keep looking at their own hearts to see if any good feeling is springing up there, which might form a ground of encouragement that they were becoming more fit for going to Christ. The Bible says, "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound." That joyful sound comes only from Calvary. It comes from the pale lips of Jesus, quivering in death, as he says, "It is finished." But the awakened sinner listens at the door of his heart, to hear the joyful sound come from there. But from there it never will come. There is in that heart no good thing, and no voice but that of condemnation will ever come from it.

Take a Scriptural illustration. The children of Israel had fiery flying serpents sent among them, the sting of which was

deadly. The people were dying, on the right hand and on the left. God commanded a brazen serpent to be lifted up in sight of the perishing, assuring them that whosoever looked in faith would be instantly cured. Here is a man who has been wounded, and is in a dying state. His friends have taken him out in sight of the saving object, and urge and entreat him to look and be saved. Instead, however, of looking at the brazen serpent, he keeps looking at his wound. He keeps telling of its painfulness, of the increase of bad symptoms, and bitterly bewailing his miserable state. Would his looking at, and talking about his malady save him? No: he would die under the very shadow of the object of salvation; not because there was no saving power in it, but because he would not do what God commanded,—look at the brazen serpent, instead of at himself.

Dear reader, Jesus says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." But you say, "I cannot go to Jesus with such a hard heart. I have too little feeling, and must wait till I can get more conviction of sin." All this arises from the pride of self-righteousness of your heart. Suppose that you could feel that your heart was growing better, that you *had* more feeling, and that upon making this discovery, that you were to begin to rejoice; what would this be but rejoicing in yourself instead of in Christ? It would only be making a Saviour of your feelings, your emotions, your penitence, instead of the heaven-appointed Saviour.

And this is one great reason why the religion of many professors of the present day is so fitful and unreliable. They live by feeling, and our feelings are as changeable as the veering winds. Hence no dependence can be placed in such professors. They are either in the raptures of excitement or sunk down into the stupor of indifference. When they feel well they will do well.

Their religion is not like the peaceful river, rolling calmly on, day after day the same, but it is like the mountain torrent, caused by heavy rain that comes foaming madly down, but in the dry season, when it is most wanted, is nowhere to be found. It is not like the steady light of the sun, brighter and brighter to the perfect day; but it is like the glare of the lightning,

which, on a dark night, dazzles your eyes with the sudden illumination of earth and skies, and then leaves you to plod on in greater darkness than before.

True faith trusts in Jesus alone, and as he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," its confidence is not destroyed by change of feeling. On that terrible night, when "the angel of death spread his wings on the blast," and breathed destruction upon the first born in the Egyptian families, the Israelites were saved by simply obeying the word of the Lord, and sprinkling the door-posts with blood. They did not need to bar or barricade their doors to keep the destroyer out. It was not necessary to sit up all night, clasping the first born in their arms, or sending up fervent prayers that he might be spared to them. No: if they believed the word of the Lord, and *did what that word required*, they could go to bed and sleep calmly and sweetly under the protection of blood.

So with the believer in Jesus; he is under the protection of the precious blood of Christ, and he knows that his soul is safe in the keeping of infinite love. If the Israelite's faith in God's word, and in the protecting power of the blood, began to fail, he would at once be thrown into an agony of fear and doubt; and as the critical hour approached, and as he heard the first wild, despairing cry from the home of his neighbor that the destroyer had visited, he would be apt to resort to all kinds of expedients of his *own devising*, for the protection of the loved one. If he had steady faith, however, in *God's remedy*, no doubt would disturb the calm repose of his soul.

An old writer says, "Faith will be staggered even by loose stones in the way if we look manward; if we look Godward, faith will not be staggered with inaccessible mountains stretching across and obstructing apparently our onward progress. 'Go forward,' is the voice from heaven; and faith obeying, finds the mountains before it flat as plains. How strong is faith when it comes fresh from the fountain of redeeming love!" Another old writer says, "For every one look you give at your own evil heart, give fifty at Christ."

This waiting for joy and peace, and love to spring up in

our hearts before we believe in Jesus, is as unphilosphical as it is unscriptural. We cannot produce emotions by trying to feel. Suppose I were to say, "I will now begin and feel sorry;" I could not feel sorry by mere trying. But let me fix my mind upon some sorrowful subject, — on my mother on her death-bed, and her pale and quivering lips, giving me her dying charge; and the emotion of sorrow will spring up without my trying to produce it. If I say, "I will now begin and feel joyful," I cannot produce that emotion by any direct effort. But let me fix my mind upon some joyful fact, and at once my heart will be filled with real gladness.

So let the sinner look to Jesus, as he utters the deep death groan that rends his bleeding heart; and let him believe that all this suffering, all this boundless love was for him, and as one says, "he must be more or less than a man," if he does not melt him down into penitence and love. Hence the Bible tells us that "faith worketh by love and purifies the heart." To expect good emotions before faith in Jesus, is to expect the effect before the cause.

"Let no sense of guilt prevent you;
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."

## CHAPTER VI.

### OBSCURING CLOUDS.

It has been the experience of all who have had the happiness to be taught in the school of Christ, that they have had more difficulty in *unlearning* than in learning. The prejudices engendered by an erroneous religious training; the opinions of men of high standing, and of eminent piety; the writings of great men, with whose fame the world has resounded; a blind attachment to the church of our fathers, however far that church may be from the truth; and a whole bundle of preconceived notions in regard to religion, which have no foundatlon in the Bible;—these all stand in our way, as mountain barriers to the reception of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

It is truly melancholy to think of the influence that prejudice will exert on the human mind on the subject of all others the most important—salvation. It spreads the darkness of midnight over the understanding, twists and distorts all our modes of reasoning and thinking, and leaves its own horrid impress upon all our conclusions. It leads men to read the Word of God, not to discover truth for themselves, but to find something to sustain their own favorite theories. These theories are often so absurd, that the letting in of a little common sense upon them, would be enough to dispel them, as the mist is dispelled by the rising glories of the sun.

It has been truly said, that you cannot reason a man out of a thing that he has never been reasoned into; and the only cure for this unhappy state of mind is to come to the Bible as to the foundation of truth, saying, "Lord, what I know not teach thou me." When the voice of prejudice exclaimed, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth," the happy convert who had just found the Saviour himself, and whose soul was glowing with desire for the salvation of his friend, had too much wisdom to sit

down and enter into an argument about the matter. Had he done so he would in all probability have lost his temper, and have done more harm than good; but there was holy power in the kind reply, "Come and see."

There is the greatest difference among men as to the reception of gospel truth. Some receive the truth the first time they hear it. With the rapidity of lightning, conviction of their lost state flashes upon their minds, and at once they go to Jesus for pardon. They can tell the day and the very hour when they were converted. A large portion of the conversions recorded in the New Testament are of this character.

But with many who are truly the Lord's children, it is quite different. The light of the gospel broke upon their minds gradually as the dawning of the day. They can tell of no sudden terrors, no appalling alarms, no powerful convictions, hurrying them on to the verge of despair, and shaking their souls over the fiery gulf. Said one, "The Lord awoke me as the mother awakes her babe—*with a kiss*." Neither can such persons tell much of great raptures and ecstatic joys in their conversion. That the truth as it is in Jesus, in its full-orbed grandeur has arisen upon their souls, there can be no doubt. That Christ is unspeakably precious to their souls they *know*, and there is no hesitation in the tone with which they say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, I now see;" yet they cannot fix the very day when this great change took place. They often write bitter things against themselves on this account, and fear that they have never been converted at all. But let such remember that to be *in Christ* is the essential thing: the way in which we have reached that place of safety is of little moment.

When the floodgates of heaven were opened, and a wild deluge was about to sweep the globe of its guilty inhabitants, to be *in* the Ark was to be safe, whether the Ark had been reached by a few rapid bounds, or by slow and halting steps. So to be able to say, "I have found him whom my soul loveth," is of vastly more importance than to be able to relate an experience full of thrilling alternations of feeling, and with dates as correct as the revolutions of the earth.

One great reason why many are kept from accepting salvation by faith in Jesus is preconceived and erroneous opinions as to what religion truly is. They have arranged in their minds what they must do, and how they must feel, if they ever become Christians. They have marked out a process in their own minds through which they suppose they must go,—a process composed of weeks or months of gloom and terror of soul, of bitter tears and agonizing prayers, followed by a sudden gush of joy; the whole process being as distinctly marked as the various stages of an intermittent fever. They think that when all these emotions have been experienced, God will be changed in his feelings toward them; that then his anger will be turned away from them; and that, in consideration of the great change that has taken place upon them, he will forgive their past offences and love them freely. Tell them that all this attempt to change God, and to make themselves more acceptable to him by efforts of their own, is not only foolishness, but wickedness; that it is repudiating God's plan of saving them, and daring to substitute one of their own; that no change needs to be effected in God, he having already so loved them as to give His Son to die for them; that there is now absolutely nothing between them and pardon and justification, but to believe in the perfect satisfaction which Jesus has made to a broken and an insulted law;—tell them all this, I say, and you do great violence to the notions and feelings that have been made strong by the culture and indulgence of years.

The state of mind described is well illustrated by the case of Naaman, the Syrian, (see 2 Kings, 5.) This man had a dangerous and loathsome disease, which cast a dark shadow over his life. The good news reached his ears that there was a man of God in the land of Israel who could cure him; and he at once started upon his journey, surrounded with all that pomp and grandeur which his wealth enabled him to command. As he draws near to the residence of the man of God, he arranges in his own mind the whole method of his cure. He already in imagination sees the prophet hastening to meet him, and, moving his hand over the diseased place, lift up his eyes to heaven

and invoke the Almighty aid, when suddenly his whole frame thrills under the consciousness of a perfect cure.

This was Naaman's plan, but it was not God's. The simple message is sent to him, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." What a severe blow to the man's preconceived notions! The scowl of displeasure is on his brow, and indignation is in his heart, because God will not carry out his prepared programme. God's way of cure was too simple a way, and too humbling to his pride. But at last, through the persuasions of love, he went and did what the Lord commanded; and at once he was made whole.

So, my dear reader, cast away your own notions and prejudices; cast from you with a noble scorn the self-righteous pride that would lead you to question the wisdom of God's way of saving you; and this hour salvation shall come to thy heart.

See that poor diseased woman, in the days of our Lord, pressing her way through the crowd, that she may touch the hem of his garment. See how pale, and weak, and helpless she is, in herself. The crowd, surging and swaying to and fro, sometimes carry her far from the object of her hope. But she does not give up. She does not say, "What can such a poor, weak invalid as I am, do?" She does not sit down and philosophize about the likelihood of a mere touch of the hem of the Lord's garment doing her any good. She presses her way forward, and at last her trembling hand just touches his garment; and at once her bent and shriveled form expands into health and vigor. Our Lord instantly looked round, and inquired who had touched him. There were many crowding and pressing upon him, but he knew that one believing soul, in particular, had touched him with the hand of faith. He felt that healing power had gone forth from him to some believing heart.

Reader, that blessed Saviour is near you while you are reading these lines. You need not ascend to the heights to bring him down, nor descend into the depths to bring him up; you need not go to the uttermost ends of the earth in pursuit of him; you need not wait to find him at protracted meetings, or penitent seats, though many have found him there. He is nigh you

this moment, yea, in your heart, if you but believe his word. There is but the vail of unbelief between you and him this moment, and let that be torn away, and the peace of heaven will pervade your heart as you cry, "My Lord, and my God!'

It not unfrequently happens, that, after the plan of salvation has been presented in the plainest way, we are met by the assertion, "I cannot believe." Now, this is an assertion which plainly contradicts your Maker to his face. The Lord who made you must know what you can and what you cannot do; and the very fact that he commands you to believe, and threatens you with eternal punishment for not believing, is the highest evidence that you can do it.

Jesus says, "Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life;" and you have the boldness to say to that Saviour, "*I cannot* come unto thee." Suppose, for example, that a man has insulted his best friend, and, when urged to go and confess his fault, and ask his friend's forgiveness, he says, "I cannot do it." What does he mean by that "cannot?" Does he mean that his limbs have become paralyzed, so that he cannot go to his friend's house? No. Does he mean that he has lost the power of speech, so that he cannot ask the injured man's forgiveness? No. The meaning of his "cannot," is, that he has such an obstinate, bad temper that he *will not* do it. The perverse pride of his heart is such, that he will not do what the voice of God above him and the voice of conscience within him, alike declare to be his imperative duty.

It is so with the sinner. He is going about with a great deal of zeal to establish for himself a righteousness, but he will not *submit* himself to the righteousness of Christ. He thinks himself very humble, very broken-hearted and contrite; he declares his willingness to do any thing required of him. Ask him to stand up in public meeting and express his desire for the prayers of God's people, and he will promptly do it. Ask him to attend inquiry meeting, and he will do that. Ask him to go home and pray and read his Bible, and his compliance is prompt. But there is one thing he *will not* do: He will not do the very *first* thing that his God requires of him; that is, to be-

lieve in Jesus. He says he has repented of sin, and declares readiness to give up every sin; but the very first sin the Spirit points out he refuses to abandon; that is, the sin of unbelief.

He is like a man who has a broken limb. The physician is called in, and the man professes to be willing that his medical attendant should handle the limb in whatever way may be necessary. The hand of skill passes along the limb, pressing here and there, till at last it rests upon the injured part, when the patient starts, and exclaims, "Ah, Doctor, you must not touch there!" "Yes, but," says the doctor, "that is the very place to be touched, and if you will not let me touch *that*, there is no use of my staying here."

So, sinner, the Spirit of God pours a whole flood of light on the sin of unbelief, and points that out as the murderer of your soul; and you not only refuse to give it up, but speak as if you *could not* give it up, and as if your God had laid you under the absolute necessity of calling him a liar! Oh! do you not see that there is an unfathomed depth of pride in your heart, that is keeping you from Jesus? If you are willing to be saved, the Saviour is willing, and what, then, is to hinder the lost from being found? No more precious blood was shed for John, or for Peter, or for Paul, than has been shed for you; and if ever you are saved at all, you must be saved as they were—by the application of that blood to your own soul by faith. There is no reason on God's part why you should not this moment be saved. Any barriers that remain are of your own putting up, and keeping up. Throw open the door of your heart, and invite the blessed Lord to come in.

"Ye ransomed of Jesus,
Come sing of his love,
He stooped down to raise us
To mansions above:
Jehovah on him our transgressions did lay,
And he bore the huge burden, and bore it away."

## CHAPTER VII.

### MIGHTY TO SAVE.

Souls fleeing from the wrath to come often need *strong consolation.* It has been observed that Satan will do what he can to keep a man from becoming a Christian at all; but, if he cannot succeed in this, he will try, by doubts and fears, to make him as *miserable* a Christian as possible. And so this enemy of souls tries first to lull souls asleep, in a presumptuous security. By false representations of the general mercy of God, by perverted views of the nature of sin, and by preaching from the old, popular, and pleasing text, "Thou shalt not surely die," he will try to keep all thoughts of coming wrath from disturbing your soul.

But, if in this he cannot succeed, if no species of hellish logic can keep the soul from concern about its state before God, then the "father of lies" will try to persuade the sinner that there is no salvation for him. Hence you will see the same man, in the course of a few hours, rush from the extreme of presumption to that of despair. Formerly he could not be made to fear, now he cannot be made to hope. To such I would especially address myself in the following remarks.

Such persons are just as much in the service of the devil in their present state of mind as they ever were. They may go to the house of God, may attend inquiry meeting, may converse with religious people freely, and appear to be more religious than they ever were before; but they are still believing Satan's lie, in opposition to God's truth: they are intrenched in unbelief, under the influence of which, they refuse to trust the imperishable word of the God of truth, and cast back the precious promises in the face of the Eternal.

There are two great truths which stand out on the pages of the Bible so plain that he that runneth may read them. The

one is, that if any sinner is ever saved, God's will be all the glory; the other is, that if any sinner is ever lost, the sinner's will be all the blame. These two truths God has joined together, and let no man dare to put them asunder. We may talk about God's sovereignty, and man's free agency, about liberty and necessity, until both ourselves and our hearers become lost in the thick metaphysical fog of our own raising; but, thank God, when we emerge from out of the thick darkness of our own creating, we see these two truths in the Word of Life, shining out gloriously,—lights in a dark place, to which we do well that we take heed.

God has been at infinite pains to convince the sinner that he has no pleasure in his death, and casts the whole responsibility of his soul's eternal state upon himself. As if to set this matter forever at rest, and forever to shut the mouth of unbelief, the Eternal God, in infinite condescension, comes before the assembled world of his own guilty creatures, and swears by his own Being, not only that he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he has a contrary pleasure—a pleasure in their conversion. Now, it is said that among men, "an oath of confirmation is an end of all strife;" but it seems that between the sinner and God it is not the end of all strife; but that the sinner, after refusing to believe the *word* of God, will go on to doubt his very *oath!* O, how deep and damning is the sin of unbelief!

The doctrine that God honestly and earnestly desires the salvation of the sinner is everywhere taught in the Bible, and in the strongest terms. 2 Tim. 2: 4—"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth." 2 Peter, 3: 9—"Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Many other passages might be quoted to show how earnestly God longs for the salvation of the greatest sinner, and that when the sinner perishes, it is not because there is no love for him in the heart of God, not because the blood of Jesus has not been shed for him, not because that blood, so efficacious to save others, has no power to save

him; but simply because he persistently refuses to be saved by God's appointed method, faith in the death and righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

If God is a holy God, as is universally acknowledged, then he must desire to see all holy; and, as an evidence of this, when a little of God's own Spirit takes possession of any man, from that moment he begins intensely to long and pray for the salvation of all. Now, if a very little of God's Spirit in the heart of a Christian makes him desire the salvation of all men, does the Spirit itself only desire the salvation of a few? Ask any good man, when the spirit of prayer is imparted to him, how many perishing sinners he desires to be saved, and he will at once exclaim, "O that all my Saviour knew."

Now, that desire did not come naturally from himself, neither did it come from the prince of darkness, but is in his possession because he has been made "partaker of the Divine nature," because the mind that was in Christ is in him. In short, the fervent longing of the believer for the salvation of the world, which shows itself in tears, in prayers, and in untiring efforts, is but the echo of that voice that comes from the eternal throne, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he would turn unto me and live."

As an unanswerable proof that these were God's feelings toward a perishing world, when he gave his beloved Son, he sent a company of holy angels to announce the errand on which he came, not as a Saviour for a few, but for all. "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Now, if Jesus did not die for all, if salvation is not free to all, the Gospel could not be glad tidings to any of us.

Suppose that a number of persons are confined in prison under sentence of death. One night the door of their cell is thrown open, and a messenger from the Governor enters, saying, "Cheer up, my friends, I have good news for you." They would all expect to hear something that would make them happy. Every eye is fixed upon the face of the messenger, and the interest is intense, when he breaks the deep silence once

more by saying, "There is pardon and deliverance for *some* of you." This would not really be good news to any of them; it would not really make any of them happy; but, as they could not know who the favored ones were, would cast them back into greater suspense and anxiety than before. But if a free pardon is offered to all without exception, it can truly be called good news whether it is received or not. Some might be too proud to accept of it, and others might think they could save themselves in some other way than by accepting an offer of free grace: nevertheless, the message itself was glad tidings, and was for all the condemned.

Our adorable Redeemer must have known what was the nature of his mission, and whether the work that he undertook was for the whole race, or only for a part. And, accordingly, his account of it is, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Sinner, there are two words here that take you in, however great may have been your sins. God loved the *world:* you are one of the world; therefore, God so loved *you* as to give his son to die for *you.* The word "whosoever," also includes you. It includes the whole world who will believe in him whose blood cleanseth from *all* sin.

Indeed, had the death of our Lord Jesus not been for all, and had his love not gone out equally to all, it could not be said of him that he kept the law, that he magnified the law, and made it honorable. The law required him not only to love God with all his soul, but *his neighbor as himself.* In taking upon him our nature he became the neighbor of every man, according to his own definition of neighbor, as given in the parable of the good Samaritan. Had his love then been only a partial love, had it taken in only one portion of the race, and rejected the other, he would not have been a perfect Saviour.

But, as facts sometimes strike the mind more forcibly than arguments, permit me to turn the reader's attention to a few facts, which show the Lord Jesus as mighty to save the vilest of transgressors. One day the Lord was on a visit to Capernaum, and was invited to dinner at the house of a Pharisee. While

he sat at table, a woman, whose past life had been stained by sins of deepest dye, came into the room where he was. She had doubtless been listening to his soul-searching preaching, which had fastened conviction of her lost condition upon her, and made the whole of her past life pass in terrible review before her affrighted spirit. She began to wash our Lord's feet with her tears of penitence, and to wipe them with her hair; and, to show the fullness of her grateful heart, regardless of expense, she began to anoint him with a very costly oil.

The Pharisee was dreadfully shocked at such things being allowed in his house, and his proud heart swelled with indignation as he said within himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known what manner of woman this is, for she is a sinner." Poor, spiritually-blind mortal! Well did the blessed Redeemer know who she was, and all about her past life; but he also knew the deep repentance and the strong faith which filled her heart, and, turning to her, after administering a keen rebuke to the Pharisee, he said, "Thy faith hath saved thee."

But we come to a still more notable case. Jesus is on the cross in the midst of mortal agonies. The hour of darkness now has come, and the curse due to guilty sinners is fallen upon his holy head. Around him a perfect tempest of passion is raging, and the very creatures for whose guilt he is suffering are blaspheming him with a thousand tongues. And, worse than all the pains that racked his body, worse than the ravings of blasphemy at the foot of the cross, the light of his Father's smiles, in which he had from all eternity rejoiced, is now withdrawn, and the dismal gloom which falls upon the earth, is but a faint emblem of the darkness that covered his holy mind, as he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Yet, even in that terrible hour, he did not forget to labor for the souls of the perishing. To his two fellow sufferers he doubtless preached the doctrines of the Kingdom, and one of them receives the truth and is saved. He was suffering punishment as a thief, as one who had violated the laws both of God and man; but his past sins formed no barrier to Christ receiving him. He had no good works to present, on the ground of which he could

claim acceptance with God, and, blessed be God, they were not needed! He found the blood of Jesus a sufficient plea for his justification, and his righteousness an ample covering for his naked soul.

He was a bad man, who had been so hardened in sin that even his fellow-men could endure him no longer, but were determined to rid the earth of his vile presence, by pushing him before the bar of God; but in the last hour of his wasted life he believed in Jesus, and that moment his past guilt was all forgiven, and the promise of eternal life, from the lips of Jesus, fell upon his dying ear. O sinner, why stay away one hour longer from such a Saviour, who will in no wise cast out any that come unto him?

We have thus seen what were the terms upon which Jesus received sinners in the days of his flesh; but he is no longer on earth, and the question occurs, is he the same still? We are so liable to change, ourselves, and are surrounded with so many changes, that we are apt to suspect some change in the Friend of sinners. But the word of God assures us that He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" and, as a proof of it, we see him receiving the chief of sinners after his glorious ascension.

Shortly after he went to his throne in glory, a young man of finished education, and of splendid powers of mind, commenced a course of opposition to the Lord's cause. Possessed of great energy of character, and of an impetuous spirit, that never did anything by halves, he persecuted to death the followers of Jesus, and, to use his own words, was "exceeding mad against them." As he went on in his career of blasphemy and of blood, the eye of the Saviour looked down upon him, a witness of all the dark passions that filled his heart.

And did that eye flash with the fires of wrath? Did a red thunderbolt leap from the hands of the Lord, to dash this rebel wretch to pieces? No: the eye that once swam in tears for him, still pitied him; the hand that was once nailed to the cross for him, was kindly stretched out to pluck him from destruction; his blasphemies were turned into prayers; his hatred of Christ and his people, into love; and, thirty years after, upon a calm

review of the whole scene on the road to Damascus, he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I am chief*."

Reader, will you now believe? I have no means of knowing how great a sinner you have been; but, in the name of Jesus, I bid you welcome to a Saviour "mighty to save." The terms of Solomon's pardon to Adonijah were, "If he will show himself worthy." But Christ's offer of pardon is burdened with no such *if*. He receives the unworthy who believe in him, and through his worthiness makes them worthy. His name is Jesus because he saves from sin. An old writer says—"There is majesty in the name, God. There is independent being in the name, Jehovah. There is unction in the name, Christ. There is friendship in the word, Immanuel. There is help in the name, Advocate. But there is salvation only in the name, JESUS."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PEACE WITH GOD.

The most valuable blessing that man can enjoy on earth is peace with God. When the blessed Redeemer was about to bid his disciples farewell, and they stood around him in speechless sorrow, this was the gift which he singled out, above all others, to bestow upon them as his parting legacy. He was Lord of all, and had the whole universe out of which to choose a gift for them in that hour of parting tenderness; and the gift which he fixed upon as the most precious to them in their hour of need, was, peace with God. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you."

Observe, the Saviour does not say that he will give the believer *a peace*. The world can do that. The false hope, that maketh ashamed, can do that. But he promised to give his own peace—the same untroubled calm that dwelt in his own bosom from all eternity. Before you could make an animal happy with man's happiness, you would have to give it man's nature; and before the soul can be made happy with God's peace, it must first be made a partaker of God's nature. This is done when the soul believes in Jesus, and casts itself unreservedly upon his promises. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be *partakers of the divine nature*." Man lost his happiness when he lost the image of God upon his soul; and he can never be happy till that image is restored. No outward surrounding can make him happy, while he has no peace with God.

Why was Adam unhappy after he became a sinner? He was still in paradise, with all its scenes of surpassing loveliness. The heavens were as bright above him, and the earth as beautiful around him as before; and yet, he is now seen trembling with guilty terror, and seeking to hide himself from the pres-

THE ASCENSION.

ence of his God. The reason is that sin has entered his soul, and, instead of peace, there is misery and internal discord. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

You might place a sinner in a palace, and ransack the four quarters of the globe, to find objects to administer to his pleasures. The voices of applauding thousands might shout his praise. A crowd of flatterers might bow at his nod; but sin reigning in his heart would convert all into the misery of hell. It would make his sweetest music harsh and discordant as the groans of the damned. It would make his soul turbulent as the heavings of the burning lake, and send out from his heart the cry, "All is vanity and vexation of Spirit."

Almost every good thing in this world has its counterfeit, and so it is with peace with God. The prophet Jeremiah tells of some in his day who cried, "peace, peace, when there was *no peace*." The prophet was bitterly weeping over their lost condition, but they had not one tear to shed for themselves. He saw all the extent of their tremendous peril, but no fear disturbed their deadly stupor. Such persons fondly suppose that all is right with them, while all is wrong. They are spiritual bankrupts, while they think themselves "rich and increased in goods."

Perhaps there was a time when deep conviction of sin shook their souls to their very centre. The terrors of the Lord, and the powers of the world to come, made them afraid. Their feelings were excited to the highest pitch of human endurance. They longed for peace and comfort to come to them from some quarter. Now, in the very nature of things, the sinner will not remain long in this state. If he does not go at once to Jesus, and become possessor of true peace, he will go back into a callous indifference on the subject of religion, or else settle down upon some false hope.

It is a law of all nature that whatever is violent cannot be lasting. When we see a very violent storm, we know that it will not last long. The violent disease soon exhausts itself or the patient. The grief that is furious and clamorous over the grave of a friend, seldom lasts long. So, when the mind is deeply moved to sorrow and alarm on the subject of religion,

it is according to the philosophy of mind that there will be a reaction, that a calm will ensue; and the great danger is, unless the mind is faithfully dealt with, that this calm will be mistaken for the peace of God.

That this is the case with thousands of professing Christians, is evident from the fact that they can give no scriptural and intelligent reason for the hope that is in them. That they felt *very bad*, and that after a time they *felt better*, is about the sum total of their religious experience. As to *how* a just and holy God can forgive them, without dishonoring his law, and compromising his truth, they can give you no scriptural account; and if they attempt to direct an anxious sinner as to what he shall do to be saved, they at once exhibit the spectacle of "the blind leading the blind."

Their religion being founded upon *feeling*, not *principle*, soon settles down into a heartless form; and should the truth of God, at any time, startle their slumbering souls into alarm that all is not right with them, they immediately find comfort by falling back on their religious experience, living in the remote past. There is no class of a minister's hearers so hard to be reached by divine truth, as those who have thus pillowed their head upon a false peace. He may preach the most faithful and powerful discourses, leaping warm from a heart filled with intense solicitude for the perishing. He may expose the danger of self-deceivers with a clearness and fidelity that will sometimes alarm the true saints of God; for, as an old writer says: "It is hard to drive the dogs out without making the children cry;" but the deluded soul clutches with a tighter grasp the huge falsehood with which it is descending to perdition.

O! Dear Reader, look well to the foundation of your peace. If you make a mistake in your daily business, it may be corrected and no great harm done. If, in the erection of a house, the construction of a machine, or the solving of a difficult problem, you make a mistake, the ground may be gone over again, and all be made right; but if you die wrong, it is an eternal mistake! There is no coming back from the land of despair, to correct mistakes made with reference to salvation: but with

the day of grace ended, every rill of mercy dried up, the light of hope quenched in darkness, and insulted justice inflicting upon the soul its avenging strokes, eternity will be filled up with the doleful lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

This peace is the only real support amid the trials and sorrows of life. Earth has no ill for which Jesus has not a cure. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and we are sometimes called to pass through afflictions in which the tenderest human sympathy can do us no good. Human comforters may administer temporary relief, like a stupefying opiate given to the pain-racked sufferer, but Jesus can give a peace lasting as eternity.

Many are the remedies proposed for the sorrows of life. Here is one who, under the deep afflictions of his lot, frets, and murmurs, and complains, and makes himself and all around him miserable, by pouring out his unavailable complaints. Here is another, who sits down under his trials with a hardened indifference, submitting to the lashes of a something that he calls fate, and sullenly declaring that he must bear what he cannot help. Of such ways of finding comfort, it may be said, as of Job's friends, "Miserable comforters are ye all."

When trouble comes to the believer, he has far different comfort. He may be placed in the most trying circumstances, and every door of outward enjoyment may be shut, but then it is that Jesus comes into his soul, and, in his own mild accents of love, says, "Peace be unto you." See Paul and Silas in yonder gloomy prison. Their persecutors have scourged them till blood trickles down upon the floor of their cell; their feet are made fast in the stocks; and, locked up there in darkness and gloom, we might suppose that their state of mind would be one of unmingled misery. But in their hearts the imperishable principle of peace with God reigned, and so happy were they, that they broke out into a song of such gushing gladness, that the old prison walls for once reverberated to the very melody of heaven.

The man who has this peace can meet earthly trials, not only

calm and undaunted, but rejoicing in all the appointments of his Heavenly Father. A shower of afflictions may fall upon him, like the stones upon the head of the dying Stephen; yet like him he can see the heavens opened and the face of his Lord beaming with a smile of approval. Like the three Hebrews, he may be cast into the fiery furnace; but like them One walks with him there like to the Son of God. Like Peter, Satan may desire to have him, that he may sift him as wheat; but like him he can hear his Lord say, "I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." His frail bark may be launched upon a turbulent sea of troubles; but across the billows he sees Jesus coming to comfort him in the dark night of his sorrow; and "with Christ in the vessel, he smiles at the storm."

Dear reader, to convince you that this is not mere empty theory, or a mere flourish of rhetoric, come along with me in one of my pastoral visits. We will enter this humble dwelling; and, as we enter the sick room, tread softly for you are upon holy ground. Angels are there, and the Lord of angels is there. Upon the bed lies a kind Christian wife and mother, about to close her eyes upon earthly objects.

By the bed-side stands her husband in deepest distress, bidding her farewell as she sinks down into the cold river of death. There, too, are the little children, soon to be motherless, listening to her parting counsels, and imprinting their last kiss upon those cold lips that first taught them to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." She presses her babe to that loving heart, already struck with the chill of death, and, lifting up her eyes to heaven, offers for it her last prayer. And then, with a countenance beaming with peace, she says, "My blessed Saviour has come: "I hear him say, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; I have engraven thy name upon the palms of my hands.'" She speaks to her weeping friends of a bright world where parting is unknown, where death never shows his ghastly visage, and where all that is pure becomes permanent.

It is thus that peace with God gives complete victory over death. John Lambert, who was burned to death for Christ's sake, in Smithfield, when his legs were consumed away by the

fire, lifted up his hand, his fingers blazing like torches, and cried with his last breath, "None but Christ! None but Christ!"

That great and good man, Samuel Rutherford, said to some ministers, who came to see him, on his death-bed: "Brethren, do all for Christ; pray for Christ, preach for Christ, feed the flock of Christ, visit the sick for Christ, do all for Christ."

The dying words of John Knox were, "Come, Lord Jesus: sweet Jesus, unto thy hands I commend my spirit."

The biographer of John Elliot, the missionary among the Indians, tells us that, on his death-bed, "He was full of peace, of hope, of a calm and full trust in Jesus, that nothing could shake; yet his humility, like a guardian angel, ever hovered around his heart, and kept it in safety." Reader! prepare to meet thy God. Get by faith in Jesus that peace that maketh not ashamed, and death to you will be great gain.

"Is that a death-bed where the Christian lies?
Yes, but not his: 'tis death himself there dies."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE THIRSTY INVITED.

"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Dear reader, if you were traveling along a public highway, and were to hear a loud "Ho!" uttered behind you, there are three questions that would naturally occur to your mind. First, who speaks? secondly, who is spoken to? and thirdly, what is spoken about? Now, we are traveling to eternity, and we have listened to the solemn call contained in the above text. Let me direct your attention to these three questions.

Who speaks? It is the great God of heaven and earth who thus addresses us. That God who guides the planets in their courses, and regulates the wanderings of the flaming comet; who sustains all being, from the worm that crawls beneath our feet, to the angel who rolls his deathless song through the courts of heaven; whose awful voice is alike heard in the sighing of the zephyr, and in the thunder which rolls in terrific majesty across the heavens,—condescends to speak to guilty sinners like us. O let us listen with profound awe, for his very "forgiveness is to be feared."

When we open the pages of the Bible, or go to the house of God, we are apt to feel as if we only heard *man speak* to us. The result is that we sit in judgment upon the Word, instead of permitting the Word to sit in judgment upon us. Had we stood on the banks of the Jordan, on the occasion of our Lord's baptism, and had we heard the voice of God directly addressing us from the heavens, we think that we would have felt it peculiarly solemn. If, while sitting in our own home, we were to see a hand start out before us, and write a direct personal appeal to us on the wall, we think we could never forget

it. But in reality there is nothing more solemn in God's speaking to us in an audible voice from heaven, or in God writing a message upon the wall, than there is in God writing it in His Word, and causing the Divine Spirit to point at our hearts, saying, "Thou art the man."

But the fact is that we have got so accustomed to hearing and handling the Word of God from our youth, that we fail to realize that it *truly is* God speaking to us. This tendency to become hardened and indifferent under the very abundance of our religious privileges, is a sad sign of the deep depravity of our hearts. A stranger visiting Niagara Falls, for the first time, is thrilled with awe, and trembles at the sound of nature's most majestic voice, as "deep calleth unto deep;" but the people who have lived beside the mighty cataract all their days are apt to regard it with indifference and scarcely heed the tones of its powerful voice.

So have we seen many an outcast wanderer, who had not before entered the house of God for many years, fall down into broken-hearted contrition under the first sermon he heard, while gospel-hardened sinners sit with utter carelessness under the rebukes of the Almighty. Reader, that holy Bible in your home is an awful visitor. From week to week, the whole year round, it utters God's voice to you. Its presence in your household is one of the most solemn events of your life. By it you are to be judged on the last day; and, above the ashes of a consumed world, that voice you now little regard will pronounce your unchangeable doom.

We come to the next question: Who is spoken to? God here addresses the whole world; and yet he is not speaking to the inhabitants of the world *collectively*, but *individually*. He is speaking to us *one by one*, as we pass before him, in the words, "*Ho, every one.*" There is a beautiful propriety in this, when we remember that men are to be judged individually. It was so when man first sinned. Adam was first called up and judged; then Eve, next, and then Satan. And in the great day of final account *every man* is to receive according to the deeds done in his body, and all will find their minutest affairs investigated, as if they alone had occupied the undivided attention of the Judge.

Whenever men get spiritual profit under the preaching of the gospel, it is when they are made to feel that the Word is a personal appeal to themselves. As long as the sinner can hide himself in the multitude, and talk about how the preacher spoke to *the people*, as if it were a matter of no concern to him, the Word is rather a savor of death than of life to his soul: but when the pulpit becomes to him as a judgment seat; when his long-forgotten sins are all brought up in review; when he is made to forget the surrounding multitude in the deep sense of his own individual responsibility to God; when he is prepared to take the whole guilt of his sins upon himself, and thus to justify God and to condemn himself; when he no longer wishes to have "smooth things" prophesied to him, but places himself under the most searching and faithful ministry he can find, opening his heart to the rebukes of the Lord, and saying, "Search *me*, and *try me*, and see what wicked way there is in *me*,"—then, and not till then, is the soul in a state to give a hearty welcome to Christ's proclamation of love, that love which thrills the heart with all the power of a personal appeal: "Unto *you* is the word of this salvation sent."

God is here speaking to the world as at *a distance from Him.* Do you ask how I know this? I answer, I know it by the use of the word "Ho." We never cry "Ho!" to one who is standing near us, but to those who are distant, and whose attention we wish to secure. Now, this distance of the sinner from his God is not a local or a geographical one. In that sense he is every moment near God. His future Judge "is about his bed, and about his path, and spies out all his ways." In company or in solitude, when plunging into the mad scenes of dissipation, or devoured by the iron tooth of remorse in secret, that *eye* that darts through creation at a glance is fixed upon him. And it is this thought that troubles him and dashes many an untasted cup of pleasure from his lips. Wretched man! He cannot even flee from *himself*, much less from his God. The sinner's distance from his God is a *spiritual* one. It is that state of mind in which the sinner makes a desperate effort to forget God; and so far succeeds that though surrounded by God, though spared

by His grace, and fed by His Providence, God is not in all his thoughts. It is that state of mind in which he can live a practical atheist in a world full of God.

He forms plans of happiness, but God is not in any of them. He enters upon projects that will not bear a glance of God's holy eye, and nothing makes him more uneasy than any allusion to the fact that the HOLY ONE is near. Hence, he speaks a great deal of the order of nature, and of the works of nature, and of the laws of nature; and has exalted over the world a certain deity called *chance*. Poor wanderer! he is living in the "far country," self-exiled from all that can make life worth possessing, and yet glorying in his shame.

Reader, God is speaking to you *now*. This is His acceptable time for speaking words to you, by which you may be saved. Do not refuse to listen to Him now, nor have the daring hardihood to bid the Almighty wait your convenience. Now we know He waits to be gracious, but to-morrow may be too late forever! At any moment life's pendulum may cease its vibrations and stand still; the lamp of life may flicker and go out, and leave you to fill eternity with the bitter lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

A late writer, when making an appeal to sinners, uses the following illustration:—"On a part of the British coast where beetling cliffs, from three to five hundred feet in height, overhang the ocean, some individuals, during a certain season of the year, obtain a solitary livelihood by collecting the eggs of rock-birds, and gathering samphire. The way in which they pursue this hazardous calling is as follows: The man drives an iron crowbar securely into the ground, about a yard from the edge of the precipice. To that crowbar he makes fast a rope, of which he then lays hold. He next slides gently over the cliff, and lowers himself till he reaches the ledges and crags, where he expects to find the object of his pursuit. To gain these places is often a difficult task; and when they fall within the perpendicular, the only method of accomplishing it is for the adventurer to swing in the air, till, by a dexterous management, he can so balance himself as to reach the spot on which he wishes to descend. A

basket, made for the purpose, and strapped between the shoulders, contains the fruit of his labor; and when he has filled the basket, or failed in the attempt, he ascends, hand over hand, to the summit.

On one occasion, a man who was thus employed, in gaining a narrow ledge of rock, which was overhung by a higher portion of the cliff, secured his footing, but let go the rope. He at once perceived his peril. No one could come to his rescue, or even hear his cries. The fearful alternative immediately flashed on his mind—it was, being starved to death, or dashed to pieces four hundred feet below! On turning round, he saw the rope he had quitted, but it was far away. As it swung backward and forward, its long vibrations testified the mighty efforts by which he had reached the deplorable predicament in which he stood. He looked at the rope in agony. He had gazed but a little while, when he noticed that every movement was shorter than the one preceding, so that each time it came the nearest, as it was gradually subsiding to a point of rest, it was a little farther off than it had been the time before. He briefly reasoned thus:—That rope is my only chance of life; in a little while it will be forever beyond my reach; it is nearer now than it will ever be again; I can but die—here goes! So saying, he sprang from the cliff, as the rope was next approaching, caught it in his grasp, and went home rejoicing."

In the case of this man every moment's delay was making his case more hopeless. As he gazed upon that rope, he knew it was nearer to him now than it ever would be again. He therefore took the only wise course, and at once leaped for the rope. Dear reader, you stand on the brink of the eternal world, and if out of Christ, your peril is extreme. Above you, a God whose law you have broken, whose Son you have insulted, and whose dread curse you have braved. Beneath you the pit of woe opens to receive your soul, made, by your rejection of Christ, ripe for devouring vengeance. Behind you is nothing but a moral waste, strewed all over with the wreck of abused privileges, neglected Sabbaths, despised prayers, and counsels of pious parents and heaven-sent ministers, and dark traces of

your sins. There is not a moment to be lost. The Lord Jesus lets down within your reach the rope of salvation. The voice of your God in heaven is heard urging you to grasp it. Now, O now, or it may be forever too late! Angels pause on the wing of love to see what you will do; all heaven is interested in the result; all hell is moved for your destruction. This moment, while your eye is upon these lines, cast yourself in simple trust upon the merits of that Saviour, "who saves to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him."

We come now to the third question: What is spoken about? The whole world is invited to come and accept of salvation, under the figure of water. This is a figure which is very frequently used in the Scriptures, and with a beautiful propriety. Jesus stood, on the great day of the Feast, and cried, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." Water is essential to our existence, and is therefore appropriately used as an emblem of the salvation that is in Christ. Let our fountains of water fail for even a few days; let God withold for a little time the showers that water the earth,—and one wild cry of misery would go up from the earth's population. Let God continue to cut off our supplies of water, and soon our world would become one vast sepulchre.

So, salvation through the death of Jesus is absolutely essential to the life of the soul. There are many who think that human nature is not so utterly depraved but that it can restore itself; that there is a little spark of holiness left,—a little regenerating principle that only requires to be nurtured and cherished, to make man all that his God can reasonably require him to be. This development theory—this fancy of man having a little *spiritual capital* to start with, which, by trading upon it industriously, will make him rich towards God—is one which is exceedingly popular in the present day. It builds up the pride of human nature, and allows man to glory in self.

But it is as false as it is dangerous. The Lord says, "Unless ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have *no life in you.*" He does not say that men have *a little life*, which, by good management on their part, may be brought to great strength and

vigor. No; but he tells us that "he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he who believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth upon him." Without Christ, the description that God gives of the human soul is, "*dead* in trespasses and sins;" and, unless quickened by the grace of God, it must be forever bound in the chains of the second death.

Another reason why water may be used as a figure for salvation, is, its *cleansing properties*. It is the cleansing element which we use in our homes and upon our persons. That man's soul is defiled by sin, is not only a doctrine of revelation, but one of universal experience. God's holy eye looked down upon our world, and the verdict which He gave as to the state of our race was, "they are altogether become corrupt." For this universal corruption, a remedy has been provided in the blood of Jesus, "which cleanseth from *all* sin." But many, in the pride of their hearts, turn away from God's remedy, and propose plans of their own devising. Some propose education and the general diffusion of knowledge, as the remedy for the sins of the world.

Now, I would not say one word against education. Popular ignorance is more to be dreaded than the earthquake, the pestilence, or the famine. The ignorant man, though living amid the refinements of civilization, is still but half a savage. But rest assured that no amount of education can ever purify the heart of man. The first of scholars has often been the first of villains; and men whose splendid intellectual powers have excited the admiration of the world, have been men of gigantic wickedness. The world is not so badly off for talent as it is for moral purity. The chemist may be able to analyze the intoxicating cup, and tell of its deadly properties; and the physician may be able to tell of its bad effects upon the human system; and yet both of them may be abandoned drunkards. The soul of man needs not only to *know* what is right, but to *love* what is right. This, nothing but the salvation of Christ can impart. It alone can bring with it a double blessing—knowledge in the head, and love in the heart. As God is both light and love, so the Gospel, which comes from Him, enlightens while it purifies.

But water may be used as a figure of Christ's salvation, from its *freeness*. How free to the whole race, and how abundant the supply! As it rolls past us in the beautiful river, swells and undulates in the magnificent lake, or leaps and dashes in the mountain torrent, how free it is to all! The pure gift of God, it comes to us "without money and without price." So with the salvation that is in the Saviour. As that river of salvation rolls past us, the Lord's own proclamation is, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life FREELY." Young and old, rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant, the bond and the free; all are pressed and plied by the urgency of inviting love, to come. Oh sinner! if you only knew the gift of God, and who is speaking to you, you would this moment begin to ask of Him this *living water*. Wait not to bring a price in your hand, to purchase what is offered you as a gift, but come in the depth of your soul-poverty, and be enriched with imperishable treasure.

That was an impressive scene, when God commanded Moses to strike the rock in the wilderness, and streams of refreshing water gushed forth for the perishing. About a million and a half of human beings were perishing for want of water, and as the hot wind passed over that scorched and burning plain, where all vegetation was dying, it carried upon its wings the wild cry of human despair. By the direction of God, Moses takes his stand beside the rock in Horeb, and lifts the rod that is in his hand, and strikes the rock three times, when behold! a clear, cool, refreshing stream of water gushes forth, and rolls away through the camp of Israel.

See the joy that now beams forth from countenances where, but a few moments before, despair sat enthroned. I see mothers and fathers running with the precious drink to their perishing children, the strong carrying it to their weak and dying neighbors, and shouting the glad tidings in their ears! Now, the Scriptures tell us that the striking of that rock, and the result, was a type of Christ, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."—1 Cor. 10: 4.

Those beautiful waters that broke out from the rock in Horeb,

were *free for all the people.* They were not intended for one part of the people to the exclusion of the rest. Suppose, however, that a man had come and taken his stand beside the gushing waters with an empty pitcher in his hand. His eyes are blood-shot, his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, and his whole appearance indicates extreme suffering for want of water; yet instead of drinking and dipping his pitcher full, he stands saying within himself, "I am a poor creature; I can do nothing of myself; it is true I am perishing for water, but I must wait God's good time;" and he actually stands there expecting that in God's good time the water will flow up into his pitcher and fill it full. How long do you suppose he would have to wait? Would God work another miracle to satisfy his whim, and to indulge his insolence in refusing to use the heaven-appointed means within his reach? No: we can all see the folly of such conduct in temporal matters; and yet in spiritual things many of my readers may be following a similar course.

The Rock Christ Jesus was stricken for you. The waters of salvation gush forth for you. The Lord's own invitation to you, is, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And yet, instead of taking your Saviour at his word, and simply believing on him as all your salvation *now*, you are waiting for some specially favored time to come and fit you for going to Christ, by making your heart softer and purer than it is now! That time will never come, and your heart will become harder, and you will drift away farther from God the longer you stay away from Jesus. The only difference between one man and another in God's sight, is that one has believed on the Lord Jesus, and the other has not. Here are two men—one of them is a child of God, a joint heir with Christ, a crown of glory in reserve for him, and the favor of God now shining upon his path; the other is under the curse of the law; the wrath of God abideth upon him, and dying in his present state his soul will be lost as sure as the God of truth has spoken.

Now what has made this vast difference? Simply, that the one has believed in the Lord Jesus, and the other has rejected him. This alone will make the difference between those on the

right hand and those on the left, in the day of judgment. And unbelief alone fixes the great gulf between heaven and hell forever! One came to our Lord, in the days of his flesh, and said, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" and the reply was, "This is the work of God, to *believe* on Him whom He hath sent." Not a single step can be taken heavenward till this is done.

I have lately seen an account of a conversation between a Christian gentleman and a young lady, who was deeply anxious about her soul, that will illustrate this point. She described herself as "uncertain what to do." "Why are you uncertain what to do?" he asked. She replied, "I have been coming daily to these meetings for four weeks, and all that time I have felt anxious about my soul; but all I do does not seem to make my case any better." "What do you try to do?" "I have striven to convince myself that I am a sinner—as I know I am. But though I know it, as a truth I do not feel about it as I should." "How would you feel about it if you could?" "I would have deep conviction." "What is your present impression about yourself?" "That I am a great sinner—that is all." "And what would you have more?" "That is what I do not understand. My next step should be for deeper conviction. But what further can I do?"

"Your mistake is a very common one," he replied. "Your next step, and only step, is to Christ, just as you are. Go to Him at once. You can do nothing. Hitherto you have been relying upon yourself. Renounce all this as a dishonor done to Christ as a Saviour, and go to Him for all the help you need, hope for, or desire." "Oh!" said she, as if a new light had dawned upon her mind, "is *that* my next step?" "Not your *next*, as if you had already taken one or more right steps in religion. Going to Christ is your *first step* and *only* step. He does not say, 'come to conviction—come to a deeper sense of sin.' But He says, 'Come unto *me*.'"

She then exclaimed, "O! what a self-righteous creature I am! I see it all now. I have been refusing Christ, while all this time I thought I was preparing to come to Him." "Will you go to Jesus *now?*" "I WILL," was the emphatic reply.

Suppose a number of the Israelites, after Moses struck the rock, and after they had seen the waters gush forth, had not only refused to drink of these waters, but had gone and commenced striking *another rock*, determined to obtain water for themselves or perish; their corpses would soon have lain around the rock, awful evidences of the danger of despising God's way of saving us, and of substituting our own. They might have been very *sincere* in their efforts to obtain water by their own works; they might have spent whole days and nights in the most earnest attempts to accomplish their object; but their sincerity would not make the water flow, nor make the Almighty abandon His own plan and adopt theirs.

Paul bore witness to the sincerity of the Jews, when they were going about to establish a righteousness of their own, and would not submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ; but he does not tell us that because of their sincerity, God will accept their righteousness instead of Christ's. No: sincerity is not religion—it does not make error truth, nor change an act of human pride into an act well pleasing to God.

Over a river in Scotland, a strong stone bridge had been erected. Shortly after its completion, a furious storm of rain, of some days continuance, raised the waters of the river to a great height. The wild torrent came down with appalling force, bearing on its bosom the trunks of trees and huge blocks of wood. The arches of the bridge were filled with the rushing waters, and the strong structure seemed to shake under the pressure upon it. A crowd of persons were assembled on each side of the river, afraid to venture upon the bridge, and watching with intense anxiety for the result—when all at once a man on horseback galloped up, and before any one could stop him, rode up to the very center of the bridge. There he stood, and in clear tones which rose above the roar of the tempest, exclaimed, "I am not afraid, my friends; I *know* it will not give way; I am *sure* it will stand." That man was the architect of the bridge, and he was thus boasting in the work of his own hands. To many his confidence appeared foolishness, though the result proved that his trust was not misplaced.

What a far more rational ground of confidence has the believer in the work of the Lord Jesus! He feels that the foundation is perfect and can never give way. Amid the storms of coming warmth and the thunders of judgment, when great billows of fire shall be rolling across our globe, he shall be able to lift up his triumphant voice, and say. "I know that my Redeemer liveth. I *know* that He will keep what I have committed to Him against this day." Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

## CHAPTER X.

### THE NEW CREATURE.

The Apostle Paul says, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." I have been at some pains in former articles, to show that out of Christ the sinner cannot really perform any good work, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Hence all attempts of men to make themselves holy first, before they come to Jesus, must prove a failure, and if persevered in, will end in eternal disaster.

But it is equally true, that if a sinner truly believes in the Lord Jesus, he will begin at once to abound in good works. The Lord Jesus has done a work *in* true Christians as well as a work *for* them, and he never saves from the *guilt* of sin, without at the same time saving from its *power*. Accordingly, if believers are said to be elected, it is "through sanctification of the Spirit." If they are said to be predestinated, it is "to be conformed to the image of his Son." If they are said to be chosen, it is "that they may be holy before him in love." In short, the only evidence a man can give that he has a *living* and not a mere *dead faith*, is a holy life; for faith "worketh by love and *purifieth the heart*." An old writer remarks, "Say not that thou hast royal blood in thy veins, and art born of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by daring to be holy."

If a man had rather gossip at home or in his neighbor's house, than go to a prayer-meeting; if he had rather run to hear fifty sermons, than practice one; if he had rather talk about ministers and criticise their performances than pray for their success, or pay for their support; if he had rather talk about a thousand sins in his brethren, than mortify one in himself; if he had rather read the newspaper or the novel than God's Holy Word; in fine, if he acts as if Christ was very holy, to save him the trouble of being so, he may rest assured

that though he may pray with the seeming earnestness of an Elijah, and talk of his feelings like a Daniel, and weep like a Jeremiah, all his religion is only the cant of the hypocrite, or the ravings of the self-deceiver.

Among the first evidences of the new creature in Christ Jesus, is a *love for the Bible*. One of the most common remarks which ministers hear from the lips of young converts, is, "Oh, sir, it seems to me like a new book!" They may have been taught to read and reverence it from their earliest youth; they may have committed large portions of it to memory in the Sabbath School, and have acquired a general knowledge of its contents; yet no sooner do they believe on Jesus, than untold beauty, which they never discovered before, gleams out on every page of it, and they exclaim with David, "O how I love thy law."

Nor is this greatly to be wondered at, when we remember that the same Holy Spirit which inspired the Bible has now taken possession of their hearts, leading them not only to love it, but opening their eyes to discern "the things of the Spirit." And I have no doubt that the reason why so much of the professed piety of the present day is of such a stunted, dwarfish kind, is that it is more public than private, and more fed by harangues about religion, than by the pure, unadulterated word of truth itself.

If we read the memoirs of the martyrs and other holy men of God, whose undying example has shone down to us through the darkness of intervening years, we will find that their sturdy piety, vigorous faith, and unbending principle gathered daily strength from reading and meditating upon God's Word. If we read the lives of the men most pre-eminet for usefulness in the Church of God in modern times, we will find that they were all emphatically *Bible Christians;* and from this holy source they drew that strength which enabled them, in the language of one, "to strike the kingdom of darkness with blows that resounded through eternity."

That piety which is fed merely upon public meetings, narratives of personal experience, emotional hymns, sermons, and all that is exciting in religious gatherings, will be found to be a poor, fitful, sickly piety indeed; while that piety which draws

all its nourishment from the Bible, will not only derive most good from public privileges, but like the source from which it draws its life, "will endure forever."

Permit an illustration not drawn from imagination. In yonder small cottage lives a poor widow, whose only son, a child of many prayers, left her many years ago, to enter upon the perils physical and moral, of a sailor's life. Since that time she has heard nothing of her loved one, and has long given him up for dead. One day her pastor is with her, directing her to the precious promises of the Bible, when a knock is heard at the door, and a letter is handed in. The widow perceives at a glance that it is the well-known handwriting of her long lost son. What excitement thrilled through her whole frame! What joy lighted up her countenance, as she exclaimed, "My son is yet alive!" And with what eagerness was every word of that letter read and fondly lingered upon!

Reader, suppose that when she discovered the handwriting of her son, she had laid the letter carelessly upon a shelf till the dust of weeks accumulated upon it before she read it;—would she have shown any evidence of love to her son? Or, suppose, after a long time, she had taken it down just from a cold sense of duty, or to satisfy conscience, yawning and dozing at the end of each paragraph;—would this be any evidence of love to her son? No: whatever might be her professions, you would know that there was not one spark of true motherly love in her heart, were she to act thus.

The Bible is a letter from the Father of love, from whom we have been so long estranged. It speaks out the feelings of His heart toward us, and kindly invites us to return to the enjoyment of His favor. If we take no pleasure in reading it; if we are unwilling to make any sacrifices to understand it more fully; if we are delighted with the light and the trifling literature of the day, and regard the Bible as dry and uninteresting, we may rest assured that it is because "the love of the Father is not in us."

My dear reader, cultivate an intimate and intelligent acquaintance with your Heavenly Father's will. Study the whole

of it, for it is *all profitable*. As a good old Christian once remarked, "The Old Testament is the New Testament revealed." It will be to us a guide through a world of darkness and perplexity; wiping the eye of sorrow; cheering the heart of sadness, and flashing the light of its glorious promises across the valley of the shadow of death.

Another evidence of the new creature, is love to the Lord Jesus. An officer on the field of battle was engaged in personal conflict with one of the enemy, when he slipped and fell to the ground: in an instant his opponent's sword was lifted for his destruction, when one of his men, who loved him, threw himself between him and the uplifted weapon, and received it in his own heart. Now, as the officer rose from the ground covered with the blood of the man who had laid down his life for him, must not the emotion of love have filled his heart to overflowing?

And it is not possible for any one to believe that Jesus interposed between the point of the sword of Divine Justice and his guilty heart, and received in his own innocent heart the terrible blow which the sinner deserved, without feeling the kindness of a love that will be as permanent as God's throne. Hence, all over the world, and under all variety of circumstances, Christians are able to say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

It is said that after the battle of Waterloo, a surgeon going over the field to aid the suffering, came to a French soldier badly wounded. As he began to probe the wound to find the fatal bullet, the dying man started up with a convulsive effort, and exclaimed, "A little deeper, and you will find the emperor," meaning his heart. So wherever you find a Christian, without respect to color or clime, from the frigid to the torrid zone, you will find that, deeper than the love of home, deeper than the love of kindred, deeper than the love of life itself, is the love of the Lord Jesus. One of the primitive Christians when brought to the bar of Trajan, and asked, "Art thou a Christian?" replied, "I am: I have Christ in me." Trajan then asked him to deny Christ, when he exclaimed, "What! shall

I deny my Lord and Master? *I have Christ in me.* He was immediately led to martyrdom.

Among the first feelings produced by the belief of the Gospel, is joy, and the next is love. If a person were to rush into a burning building and save your life when in great danger, your first emotien would be joy because of your own deliverence, but your second emotion, as soon as you had time for reflection, would be that of gratitude to your deliverer. Thus it is that the reception of the gospel truth makes the sinner *happy* and *holy* at the same time. "Faith worketh by love and purifieth the heart."

Hence it is, that the young convert abandons the scenes of former gayety and worldly pleasure, in which he bore a conspicuous part, because he has ceased to have any enjoyment in them; his new-found joy in God and love to Jesus having given him new enjoyments, as much superior to those of the world, as the sun is to the glimmering light of a taper. His worldly friends think that the reason why he has left their dancing parties and the exciting scenes of the theatre, is the dread of hell or the fear of the censure of the church, or a desire to stand well with his new associates; but this is a great mistake. He has ceased to find any pleasure where he formerly sought it so eagerly, and he has begun to drink of those rivers of pleasure that are to gladden his soul forever.

It is said that there was a deep trench around the walls of the ancient city of Babylon, which, when opened, could absorb the waters of the great river Euphrates and leave its channel dry; so the love of Christ has produced such a full and satisfying joy in the soul, that all worldly channels of pleasure are left dry and worthlesss.

Whenever I hear professing Christians beginning to inquire what *harm* there can be in the social dance, or what *harm* there can be in the theatre, or in games of chance, I always know that it is a sign that the love of Christ is declining in their hearts, if indeed it ever existed at all. It is an attempt to get something to satisfy conscience, and is virtually declaring that the bread of life with which Christ feeds the soul does not sat-

isfy, and that therefore they are anxious to find some *excuse* for getting back to the service of Satan. And, instead of arguing the *rightness* or the *wrongness* of those things of which no truly spiritual mind has any doubt, I would say, Take heed, my brother, to your own heart. Your Lord has warned you, not only against going back, but against even *looking back;* and you are instructed not to *seem* to come short. You are to shun the very *appearance* of evil, and the very fact that you are beginning to glance with approval at the abounding iniquity of the world, shows that your love to the Redeemer is "waxing cold." Take that cold heart again to Jesus; and rest not satisfied till it is brimming over with his love, "who was holy, harmless, and separated from sinners."

An anxious desire for the salvation of the perishing is an evidence of the new creature in Christ Jesus. Suppose this day that a stranger were to enter your house. His apparel is plain, and almost mean. His cast of countenance is kind and benevolent, and yet a solemn sadness sits upon it, as if the shadow of some big sorrow were passing over it. This stranger begins to speak to you, and his words burn into your very heart. His conversation lifts your mind from the vain and the perishing,—makes you feel as if you heard the echo of those transporting strains that fill the courts of heaven.

You are wondering who this stranger can be, when all at once your eyes are opened, and you see that you are in the presence of your Saviour. He shows you the scars of those wounds he bore for you, and with that mild eye fixed upon you, which broke Peter's heart, he asks you if you love him. With a trembling earnestness you answer, "Blessed Saviour, I do love thee!" He tells you that all around you are dying sinners. That he has shed his precious blood for them, and longs for their salvation with a depth of solicitude of which you can form no conception. And then he asks you, as an evidence of your love to him, that you will go to them and tell them the story of his love, and urge them to flee from the wrath to come. Christians, Jesus *is* thus speaking to you. The perishing *are* thus around you. They live in your houses, they eat at your boards; you mingle

with them every day in the business of life. O, as you love the Lord Jesus, as you value an eternity of bliss, and as you would not, in the day of judgment, be found red all over with the blood of souls, try to pluck them as "brands from the burning."

## CHAPTER XI.

### WORKING FOR JESUS.

It is a source of sublime satisfaction to reflect that the cause of Christ on earth is destined to enjoy a perfect triumph. We have the authority of God's word for believing that long as the sun shall shine—long as the moon sends her silvery beams across the world—the name of Jesus shall thrill the human heart with the magic of its power. The Lord whom we serve is erecting a spiritual temple upon the Rock of Ages, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Amid the rising and the falling of empires, amid the rush and the conflict of hostile parties, in spite of the unholy intrigues of political schemers, and the proud boasts of infidel blasphemers, that temple shall continue to increase in strength and loveliness, till the top stone is brought forth amid shoutings of grace, grace!

But how is a result so glorious to be brought about? Not by a time-serving policy, and a spirit of unholy compromise on the part of God's people; not by keeping in the background the great truths of the Gospel for which Apostles contended, even unto death; not by splitting God's truth into portions, and calling them essential and non-essential, important and unimportant, in order to suit the taste and to gain the favor of a degenerate world. No. If truth is to triumph, it must be by the display of a spirit the very reverse of all this,—a spirit which bows with the profoundest reverence before the *whole* of the revealed will of God, and cherishes every part of Gospel truth as its life and strength,—a spirit which, while it loves the whole body of the faithful, called by what name they may be, and while it weeps burning tears over a perishing world, still adheres, with stern resolution, to the laws and established order of Christ's kingdom, and had rather die a thousand deaths than yield up a

single fragment of "the truth as it is in Jesus." This was the Spirit of the great Captain of our salvation; this the spirit which inspired the faithful in all ages, and the man who possesses it leaves the impress of his own lofty character upon society, and occupies the high and honorable position of a faithful witness for God.

Much is said in the present day about Christian charity, and of the necessity of its controlling the judgment we form of those who differ from us in opinion. Now, it is vastly important that we should possess that charity, which is first of all the graces, and without which the most high-sounding professions are but an empty name. But there is a principle which passes current in society for Christian charity, which has nothing of charity but the name. True charity is the child of heaven; this has its birth of earth. True charity rejoices in the truth; this sacrifices truth to expediency. True charity is hated by the world; this, by the wicked, is rapturously applauded. True charity thinks of what is *right*, and leaves consequences with God; this thinks of consequences first, and leaves the right to be the child of circumstances. True charity "rejoiceth in the truth." It boldly adheres to what is right, rather than to what is popular, and, undaunted by the cry of bigotry, which the ignorant and the designing may raise against it, "contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." It says, "I fear God and I know no other fear."

Dear Reader, I entreat you to cherish unshaken confidence in the power of truth. Truth in the hand of Jehovah is omnipotent, men may shackle it; they may imprison it; they may, for a time, bury it amid the rankest errors, and the most unseemly and unshapen evils; but loose its shackels, give it room for operation, and it will arise, fresh and immortal, and dispel everything around it that wants the impress of its own holy nature. It says nothing against the power of truth, that error is sometimes so prevalent, that it seems to triumph over it. As well might we argue against the pervading nature of light, because there are many dungeons in the world that have never been visited by a single ray. When we darken our houses by

shutting our doors, and keeping out the light from our windows, is this held as evidence that light is less powerful than darkness?

I fear there are many professing Christians in the present day who have very little faith in the power of truth, or in the overruling providence of God; for they will not breathe a syllable against popular error, till they have measured, and ascertained to a nicety, the length and breadth of consequences, and how far they may safely venture without giving offence. Why are men so much afraid of conseqences now? O, that like Noah, and Daniel, and Paul, they would but do their duty, and trust God with results! Why should we suspect God's fidelity? Why should we act as if he were a Being who sees no distinction between right and wrong, and who is ever ready to abandon the cause of truth and holiness, which he has sworn to maintain? Why should we act as if he were in the habit of breaking his word, and leaving in their trying moments, those who speak truth and work righteousness?

Beloved reader, my prayer for you is that you may be bold for the truth, and that a double portion of the Spirit of God may be given you, that when the storms of opposition from the world begin to rage around you, you may feel the pleasant light of the sun of righteousness shining upon your soul, and stand,—

> "Like some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vail and midway leaves the storm;
> Around whose base, while rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

These lines present the picture of a "great head," rising superior to detraction, and fixing a single eye upon the Saviour, while sore beset by the world's opposition. It is such a picture as is presented in the first Christian martyr—the devoted Stephen. Think of what that God-like man saw ere he forgave his enemies, and "fell asleep." "Behold," said he, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man *standing* at the right hand of God." He saw Jesus, not *sitting*, but standing. Now, it is said, "When he had by himself purged our sins, he *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" and when he ascended

the Father said to him, as evidence that his work was accepted, "*Sit* on my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool." But when Jesus looked down, and saw the dauntless Stephen defending his cause single-handed, in the midst of bloody men, he *stood up* to receive and welcome the soul of his servant. Like Joseph with his brethren, he could no longer refrain himself. O, who can tell with what intense interest the Prince of Martyrs stood and gazed upon him who was proving faithful unto death! Glorious sight! Well might Stephen "rejoice in spirit" when he saw that Almighty gush of tenderness toward him. There he saw a Saviour, who more than died a thousand deaths for him, and whose sounding bowels longing for his embrace, parted the sky asunder, and made the way to heaven ready, ere he was ready to enter. Well may he strike now with a bolder hand the celestial lyre, and roll his deathless songs over the hills of paradise. Who can now forbid him to tell of Immanuel's love, or pluck the laurels from the sacred brow of the martyr? He can now roll on his immortal numbers in praise of Jesus, and none can taunt him with singing too long or too loud of his excellencies.

And what, my dear reader, should hinder us from catching up the chorus? Is the "Lamb slain," less worthy of our praises now than he will be hereafter? What although we hear everywhere around us the hissing of the serpent? Let us drown his loud hissing by our louder praises. Those who work hardest for Jesus now, and are least ashamed of him now, will hereafter shine brightest in glory. While vice walks forth boldly, and reigns rampant, let not Christians be ashamed boldly to acknowledge Christ's cause; not in secret places, but in the face of day; not in whispers, but in tones loud enough to convince sinners that they are in downright earnest, and that they fear their eternal destruction more than any reproaches they can cast on them. Time was when Christians rose with the sun, and boldly sung the praises of the Lord, and made it the very business of their lives to promote his glory. But "the god of this world," not liking such proceedings, raised a storm and drove them into "dens and caves of the earth."

Satan can ill endure the thought that Christians should be as bold for Christ as sinners are for him; and rather than allow them to be so, he will move earth and hell to abash and discourage them. He dreads to see believers stand up for God in open day. He knows, indeed, the power of secret prayer, but he knows also that God will not own prayer unless it is seconded by action. When this is not the case, the prayer is insincere, and cannot be heard. Let our prayers, then, be accompanied by bold action, the bolder the better, unless it be inconsiderate and rash. Our Saviour not only gives us the cup of life for ourselves, but promises us a reward if we help it round to others. He offers a premium, proportioned to the activity of those who become co-workers with him in pleading with others to receive the cup of salvation.

You cannot wish to have the blood of souls upon you in the great day, when the Master appears; then be now faithful in presenting the Saviour to all who come under your influence To be privileged to tell the glad story of the cross; to stand between the Eternal God and perishing men, as they rush on in haste to perdition, and entreat them to be reconciled to God, is the most solemn work that man can engage in on this side of the eternal world. This work is not committed to ministers alone, for the Lord says, "Let him that heareth, say come." The persons with whom you daily come in contact, are not the creatures of a day, whose knell is to be rung when the light of life forsakes their eyes. All is not to be over with them when they reach the boundary line that separates time from eternity, else might you have some excuse for your indifference. But they are to live as long as God lives, in bliss unspeakable, or in woe of which no imagination can form a conception.

They are now living amid the light of the Gospel, which permits of no neutrality, and which must prove the savor of life or of death to each of their souls. Upon you it may depend whether they are to be saved or lost. O, my brother, this great responsibility Jesus puts upon you! It is a responsibility under which an angel might tremble, and would fall upon our minds with a crushing weight were it not that the same Lord who gives the command, promises also strength for its performance.

Besides, he only asks us to go and tell his truth: he does not ask us to go and be *successful;* for success is *his* work, not ours. The sinner may scorn your message, and fling back the truth you utter with a proud contempt; but the fact that you have warned him with tearful earnestness, and with a loving heart, will acquit you of all blame in the day of the Lord.

A father, one beautiful summer afternoon, went out to walk in the fields, with his little daughter, a child of some four or five years of age. While the little one amused herself in picking flowers and chasing butterflies, the father sat down under the shadow of a tree, and fell asleep. He slept but a short time; but when he awoke his loved one was no where to be seen. In earnest tones he called her name, but echo only answered his voice, when, discovering a precipice at one side of the field, he rushed to its edge and gazed over, when, to his horror, he saw the corpse of his dear child, her fair hair stained in her own blood.

Who can tell the anguish of that father? He blamed himself with her death, and in wild and frantic words called himself her murderer. It was a heavy burden upon his mind till his dying day. Dear parent, take heed that you do not slumber and sleep in spiritual indifference, while your dear children are dropping into hell! If their bodies are suffering, you run in eager haste for medical aid, and hang over them in deep anguish; but, O, neglect not the disease of the soul! Send for the Great Physician, in believing and importunate prayer, saying "Come down ere my child die." He will hear you, and make your children God's children and heirs of Eternal Glory

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE GOSPEL FEAST.

DEAR READER: I have now set before you the world's hope, as seen in Christ crucified. The great feast of God's love has been spread before you, and you have been earnestly, lovingly urged to partake. "O! taste and see that the Lord is gracious." It is to me a matter of deep, heart-felt solicitude what you will do with this invitation. Will you reject it or receive it? Your eternal well-being hangs upon your decision. I am solemnly reminded of our Lord's parable of the great marriage feast, and of the man who came there without a proper garment, and before parting I would call your attention to the lessons taught us by that instructive parable: Matt., xxii., 11 and 12: "And when the King came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."

Our Blessed Saviour here uses one of his striking parables, to show God's dealings with his creatures, both under the Old and the New Dispensations. A great king is represented as preparing a feast on the occasion of the marriage of his son. There were certain invited guests to whom the king sent a general call to come to the banquet, as all was now ready. They, however, treated the call with contempt, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize; while some others laid hold of the king's servants, treating them shamefully, and even putting some of them to death. Against such vile and ungrateful conduct the king's resentment flamed forth, and he sent out his armies to destroy the murderers, and to burn up their cities.

But because those first invited proved themselves unworthy, and ungrateful, is the feast to be unattended and lost? No He again commissions his servants to go forth with a free, general invitation to all to come to the feast: yea, to go to the highways and use the most pressing invitations, that the banqueting-room may be filled. This is done, the guest chamber is filled, the king comes in to see his company, when one solitary individual is noticed as not arrayed in a wedding garment, the reason for this strange neglect is demanded, but the offender is speechless—he has not a word of excuse to utter He is, therefore, ordered to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness.

Our Lord's meaning in this parable it is not difficult to see The Jews had been a chosen, a peculiar people, to whom God had committed his holy oracles, and to whom a long line of prophets and holy men had been sent to invite them to come to God's banquet of love. Many of these messengers that came with Jehovah's message on their lips, were treated with the fiercest scorn, and even put to death. The gracious Saviour himself, and his Apostles, invited them to the feast with no better result. Still God treated them with amazing forbearance and long-suffering, for after the crucifixion of our Lord, when the full atonement had been made by the slaying of the Lamb, and in a special sense the feast might be said to be ready, he renewed the invitation in a most pressing form. The Apostles were commanded to begin at Jerusalem, the capital of their nation, and offer them salvation. Yes, the very men who had nailed the Holy Redeemer to the cross, and whoes hands were red with the blood of murder, had the offer of free forgiveness through the blood of the cross. God had sent his own Son to them, and they had rejected him, and treated him with the most malignant hate; but that rejected, despised Saviour still invites them, through the lips of his servants, to come to him, and the streets of Jerusalem resound with the glad tidings.

But all this wealth of love is displayed in vain. The last messengers are treated even worse than the first. They became

maddened at the very offer of pardon, because it implied guilt, which they were too proud to acknowledge. At last the measure of their iniquity became full, and the wrath of the Great King blazed forth against them. He sent against them avenging armies, and their beautiful city was burned. Fearful retribution came upon them. Abandoned to their own vile passions, discord, petty jealousy, ungovernable rage, and wild anarchy took possession of the people. Thousands upon thousands of them perished miserably by famine and battle; while the rest were dispersed, as wanderers and vagabonds, among all lands; covering every shore with the fragments of a nation's shipwreck.

But the Great King would not suffer his provided feast to be unattended. His servants went forth to the highways and hedges, with an unlimited invitation. No longer confined to the Jews, nor to the people of any one nation, the invitation was to the whole world, "Come, for all things are now ready." To the Jews the awful words had been uttered, "Seeing ye count yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles." The whole world was to be the field of exertion for God's heralds, and salvation was to be published in all the highways of the earth to every tribe of man.

Some, we learn, may come into the guest chamber, which means Christ's visible church, who are not Christians—who have not the robe of the Saviour's righteousness upon them. But the glance of Christ's eye is upon such, and though they may deceive their fellow men, they cannot deceive him. This man was among that large class, who seem to think that to be in Christ's Church is as good as being in Christ himself. Alas! how many now are in the world of woe, who when upon earth were in the outward church! They heard the word of God with deep attention; they broke off many outward sins; they took a warm interest in religious matters; parents and ministers were greatly encouraged, and spoke of them as Christians; they were encouraged to unite with the church, and may even have been elevated to official positions in the house of God; till at last God in his providence applied such tests, or placed

them in such circumstances, as developed their true character, and showed that the root of the matter was not in them. An egg and an egg-shell are very different, and yet at a little distance they look very much alike; so a man who has but an empty profession may, on ordinary occasions, appear as well as the man who has Christ in his heart, the hope of glory; but when the testing time comes, which God is sure to send, the difference will be made most apparent.

Standing upon the mountain top, in the summer time, and looking upon the forest clothed in its beautiful mantle of green, you could not tell the trees that are evergreens from the others; but, wait till the cold, bleak, wolfish winds of winter come, and you will see the difference. So in a church when all is prosperous. A popular minister fills the pulpit, and crowds constantly fill the place of worship; great numbers are from time to time added to their ranks; the financial affairs of the church are easy, and it acquires the name of being the leading religious interest in the plase. Ah! then it is very difficult to tell the empty professors from the true believers. But let a *sifting time* come—let the popular preacher leave—let divisions and bitter animosities get into their counsels—let financial difficulties begin to press upon that tender and sensitive part of man—the pocket—and soon it will be seen who are the mere *summer* professors. The true Christians then come out in all their glory; standing by the church with a warmer affection and a more steadfast zeal, the more her trials and troubles increase. "Like a tree planted by rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither." The testing time tells which are the evergreens.

See yonder two houses standing upon the bank of a beautiful stream. In outward seeming the houses are equally good. They have stood there for years, answering all the purposes of a comfortable home to their respective owners. But a testing time comes at last. The stream swells, one dark night, far beyond its usual proportions. It overflows its banks, and with a wild uproar, its dark, frowning waves beat upon those two houses. And hark! amid the howling of the winds and the

furious dashing of the waters, a despairing cry of human voices comes from one of the houses. It has begun to shake and break up under the pressure of the surging billows, and soon, with its miserable inhabitants that trusted in it, it is seen moving off upon the bosom of the angry waters, to form part of the accumulating pile of rubbish that marks their desolating course. This house was built upon the sand, and could not stand the time of trial; the other stood firm, for it was founded upon a rock.

To every man, sooner or later, the testing time will come. It is right that it should. It is part of our probation. Under its sifting power there may be the blasting of many hopes—hopes made strong by the culture and indulgence of many years; some who seemed pillars in the house of God, in the day of trial may prove to have been *rotten pillars*, only covered with a little paint and varnish; but God's true people will stand unmoved under every trial; the severest test having no more effect upon them than the fluttering of the insects wing upon the hard granite rock. "The foundation of God standeth sure." We lately saw a boy exhibit, with much pride, what he supposed was a silver dollar; it was bright and beautiful, and he spoke with delight of what it would buy. But when the testing time came, and he presented it at the counter of the store, it was found to be counterfeit. He wept bitterly, but all the tears in the world could not change the worthless thing into silver. And so the only hope that will pass current at heaven's bank, is a hope founded alone in the death and righteousness of Jesus.

My dear reader, when I think of the worth of your soul, the tremendous peril to which you are exposed, the powerful means you have resisted, and the hardening process in your mind that has been going on; when I see you standing on a precipice, drawn downward by the horrid fascination of sin, O, how earnestly I long to compel you to come in. But how are you to be compelled? Friends can not do it, ministers can not do it, churches cannot do it, vast armies, and the power of kings could not do it; it is not a physical compulsion,

but the tender, holy compulsion of love—the love of Christ. This has been tried upon you, is being tried now; O, if it fails, all fails! If this does not draw you in, you must be forever left out.

The test that was applied to this man was confined to one single point, namely, the possessing a wedding garment. By this we are to understand the garment of Christ's righteousness. If we are covered with that, all will be well; if not, we shall be covered with confusion. The king did not investigate his past life, whether he had been a great sinner or not, whether he had stood well among his fellow men for his moral deportment, or had been regarded as one who had outraged all the decencies of society; the *one fault* for which he was cast out was not having on a wedding garment. This was the test point.

To understand this better, we should remember that it was a Jewish custom, on the occasion of a marriage festival, to offer each guest as he entered a suitable garment. They were not called upon to provide garments for themselves, for men called in off the highways might plead as an excuse that they had no opportunities of obtaining a proper garment. Hence this man was speechless. He had no excuse to offer. The king knew, and he knew himself, and all in the assembly knew, that it was entirely his own fault that he appeared as he was—that a garment had been offered him and rejected.

So it is in the Gospel feast. We are not required to dress ourselves, to fit ourselves for appearing before God; we are only required to put on the holy garb of righteousness, that has already been provided for us. Hence, if we are found at last by the Great King clothed in our own filthy rags, we will not have a word of excuse to offer, but must be covered with shame and everlasting confusion. How effectually does this answer the objection of those who, when pressed to come to Christ, say, "I am not good enough yet! Very true; and you never will be good enough. And it is for that very reason that God has provided a way by which you can come, independent of your goodness. "But," says one, "I am not at

all satisfied with myself." I hope you never will be. The Bible does not say, "Being satisfied with ourselves, we have peace with God," but it does say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not satisfaction with ourselves, with our faith, or our motives, or our works, that is urged upon us, but satisfaction with Christ. It is not peace arising from an exalted opinion of myself, but from an exalted conception of the fullness that is in Christ.

Dear reader, if in the great day of investigation it should be found that you have not on the robe of Christ's righteousness, you will not be able to plead that you had no opportunities of obtaining it. You will know, and an assembled world will know, and all men and angels will know, that it has again and again been offered you, and that you would not accept it. The Spirit strove, the Bible urged, ministers preached, friends entreated, conscience rebuked, and all in vain! Ah, poor soul! are you to sink at last in the whirlpool of God's wrath, while the life-boat of salvation is near to save you? When the earth reels to and fro, when the heavens are on fire, and the stars are falling, in the light of a burning world, you will curse your folly and madness in neglecting to array yourself in the spotless robe that Christ has provided!

Why not come now, even while your eyes are upon this page, and cast your sins on Jesus? He atoned for sins of every name and of every dye; for sins against light and knowledge; sins against law and gospel; sins of omission and commission; the sins of youth, of middle age, and of hoary years, all have been laid upon Jesus. Your sins, that no arithmetic could number, that no eloquence could describe—dark and black in their moral turpitude as hell itself—the blessed Saviour has suffered for. Freely and fully you will be pardoned. Your guilty fears will all be taken away; your calling and election made sure; your soul, serene and joyful, will delight to follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth; and at last, with the blood-washed throng who have been gathered from the world's highways, you shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

It is a very emphatic part of this parable, that this man was cast out because he lacked *one thing*. There was not made out against him a long catalogue of sins and imperfections, for which he was to be condemned. Had he possessed that *one thing*, all would have been well. So is it with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth not, is condemned already." What a watch is without a mainspring, what a ship is without a helm or a compass, what a row of cyphers would be without a unit before them, is the soul that has no faith in Christ. There may be many good things about him, but the one thing wanting is a vital thing. Unbelief is the cause of every sin, the grand root of all iniquity in the human soul. It is the damning sin. That which is filling hell with victims, which is robbing souls of happiness here and eternal joys hereafter, is the God-dishonoring sin of unbelief. The act of faith secures to the soul the garment of Christ's righteousness, and ensures its admittance into the heaven of purity and love, where God and holy spirits dwell. There, in the language of the poet—

> "Out of your last home, dark and cold,
> Thou shalt pass to a city whose streets are gold;
> From the silence that falls upon sin and pain,
> To the deathless joys of the angels' strain,
> Well shall be ended what ill begun,
> Out of the shadow into the sun."

I would call attention to the deportment of the man detected without the wedding garment. He made no excuses; he uttered no remonstrances; he *was speechless*. This is very solemn and impressive. It is far more awful than if we had been told that he uttered a wild shriek of despair! His folly and madness causing his tongue to cleave to the roof of his mouth, strikes us as something far more awakening than words. The wicked rushing about in uncontrollable anguish, and calling upon the rocks and the hills to fall upon them, does not impress us so strongly as this man's speechless anguish. At present, sinners have excuses enough to make, and find words plenty with which to vindicate themselves to their fellow-men, for not becoming Christians. When we urge them, without

delay, to accept a Saviour's gracious offers, they tell us of the inconsistency of professed Christians, the pressure of their worldly cares, the temptations to which they are exposed, the strength and impetuosity of their natural passions, the obscurity of the word of God, and a long list of other excuses. But when they shall come to stand before God, and feel that his eye is looking them through and through, it will be quite different. They will be struck dumb in his presence.

They will then know that God will not listen to *excuses*, but to *reasons*. And even now the sinner knows that he has no reasons to give. But in the light of eternity this will be more fully felt: memory bringing up vividly all his past privileges, every solemn warning he has received, every sermon to which he has listened, every Sabbath when God has come near to him in love, every time that the Spirit has striven with him, every alarming Providence that has startled him from his indifference, all vows and promises and resolutions that have been broken; these, with all the events of his life, will be present with him, and palsy his tongue into silence. Memory will be inconceivably strengthened in eternity. The whole of our words, thoughts, actions and privileges will be recalled. Our whole past history will be vividly before us. Now, the sinner forgets his sins, fast as he commits them; but there, they will come up distinct and awful, in all their aggravations of being committed against light and knowledge. Children of pious parents will then remember the counsels, the tears and the prayers of those dear ones, as they labored for their salvation. The seasons of family prayer, the pious books put into their hands, the religious meetings to which they were taken, all will come up with the vividness of a present reality; and Oh! if they have all been in vain, how will the memory sting through all eternity! Think of eternity spent in counting over Sabbaths lost, privileges abused, parental instructions trampled upon, and in hearing again from memory, truths mocked at when first heard! And then, to remember that it is now forever too late to derive any benefit from these truths! "Hell is truth seen too late!"

My dear reader, there is but one day in which you can be saved, and that is the day of salvation. There is but one way in which you can be saved, and that is through faith in Jesus. When the huge billows of the flood surged around the globe, there was but one ark of safety; there was but one means of deliverance for the people of Israel, when the destroying angel passed on his mission of death, at the dark midnight hour; when the fiery serpents scattered death through their camp, there was but one brazen serpent lifted up with healing power; but one rock that sent forth refreshing waters; and on the great day of atonement, but one scape-goat to bear away the people's sins. In like manner, there is but one name given under heaven, or among men, by which we can be saved—even the name of Jesus. And there is but one thing a sinner can do to be saved; that is, to believe in that precious Saviour.

You remember that anxious father that once came to the Lord Jesus with a sore burden of grief. About twelve years before, God had given him a very precious gift, a little daughter; and every day since, he had learned to prize the gift more and more. The house that had so often been made happy by her innocent prattle and merry laugh, is now silent and sad; for the little maid is dying. The distressed father had heard of the wonder-working saviour, and in his deep anguish he said, "I will go to him." And Jesus said to him, "Be ye not afraid; *only believe*." As if he had said, "Only trust me, and I will attend to all the rest." So it is with you. Jesus has left you nothing to do, but simply to trust in his finished work. Only believe, and all will be well with your soul forever. Ponder solemnly your position before God. Are you found with the garment of Christ's righteousness upon you, or do you want that one thing needful? God's best, greatest, most precious gift is offered to you; can you prefer your own *filthy rags?* In yourself, you can never find any ground of merit on which God can receive you into his eternal home. You can never so live that the eternally Holy One will pronounce you blameless Come, then, and accept that spotless robe of Jesus, in which you will be presented faultless before God. Only believe, and

trust your eternal safety to Christ. We are told that in a public school in New York, the alarm of fire was given. A terrible panic ensued; a rush was made for the doors, and one of the teachers, a young lady, was much injured by jumping from a window. In the midst of the furious panic, one little girl sat unmoved; and when order had been restored, she was asked how she could sit so still and be so calm, when all the others were in terror. "My father," said she, "is a fireman; and he told me if there was an alarm of fire in the school, I must just sit still." This was true faith in a father's word and wisdom. She believed, and it gave her sweet peace.

"Still there is room in the banqueting hall—
Room at the Gospel-feast, still room for all;
To the table though millions already have come,
Still there is room for more—still there is room.
Then go call the lame, and the halt, and the blind,
For all things are ready. The table is spread
With the wine, and the oil, and the heavenly bread.
The bread and the oil are the choicest, the best;
And the wine from the fruit of the True Vine is pressed.
Such dainties no storehouse on earth can afford;
The storehouse of heaven has furnished the board,
Nor will it be drawn while a guest you can find
'Mong the outcast, the hungry, the lame and the blind.
To the streets, then, and lanes of the city repair,
To the dismal retreats of crime, vice, and despair;
Go to the highways and byways of sin,
And the wretched and houseless compel to come in."

Notwithstanding all the bluster of infidelity in the present day, I do not think that our chief danger arises from that source. Man is a being to whom worship of some kind is natural; he will have a religion of some kind, and the great tendency of the present day is to a religion of mere form.

We can form but little conception of the struggle which an intelligent Jew, one like Paul, for example, had to go through, when he gave up the splendid forms and ritualistic pomps of Judaism for the severe simplicity of gospel truth. There were the crowds of priests, the smoking sacrifices, the ornaments of the temple all ablaze with gold, the high antiquity and divine

origin of all that met the eye, the fire still burning in the temple that had not been extinguished for fifteen hundred years, with all that impressed the imagination, and fired the patriotism of a devout descendant of Abraham.

If one would know something of the power of these things, let him enter some of those splendid cathedrals of Europe, where everything appeals to the senses. The lofty arched roof, the massive pillars, the highly ornamented windows, the white-robed officials, the chants, and the mighty swell of the organ, that seems to shake the old wall, gray with the lapse of ages; all exert an overpowering influence upon the feelings and the imagination.

The glory of the gospel is not such as appeals to the senses; it is the whisper of Divine love in the soul. It comes with a mighty power, for it is the power of God; but it glares not upon the eye or the ear of the multitude—"comes not by observation," but does what nothing else can,—saves the soul. The holy, spiritual, awakening thought that comes to the sinner—he scarcely knows how—produces a greater revolution, than those that convulse nations and overthrow dynasties, because it saves his deathless soul.

It is the gospel of love; it fills the heart to which enmity was natural, brim-full of love, and love is never ostentatious. When the mother watches by the cot of her dying babe, night after night, she does not proclaim her great sacrifices to the world, but loves to be alone with her God, and her heavy sorrow. In our Lord's days ritualism abounded, and professors of religion could not fast, nor pray, nor give alms, without letting all Jerusalem know what wonderfully good people they were. Our Lord had for the vilest transgressors that came to him in penitence, nothing but the tenderest words and the most loving promises; but for these hypocrites he had terrible threatenings and righteous denunciations, that fell among them like thunder-bolts.

The Gospel teaches to go forth doing good every day, because the loving heart supplies the constraining motive. It leads us to do good because we are God's children, not

because we wish to be thought so. It is the very nature of the good tree to bear fruit, but the chief source whence its strength and fruitfulness comes is out of sight.

The Gospel is expansive and progressive in the human soul. The religion of rites, and forms, and ceremonies does not grow with our growth. It is not brighter and brighter to the perfect day. It goes on, age after age, depending upon the same performances. No matter what the circumstances, it goes on droning out its vain repetitions. The gospel has milk for babes, and strong meat for men. Sweet, gentle truths to woo the young; massive, strong doctrines for the most gifted intellects; and promises great and precious, for tottering old age.

The religion of ritualism is a strong device of Satan to satisfy the human soul with a sham. It says God does not look at the heart, but is very solicitous about the outward appearance. It seeks to satisfy the soul that begins to feel its dreadful loss in departing from God, with the jingle and the rattle of a few childish toys. It seeks to represent God himself as well pleased with empty parade and gaudy trappings. It is the religion of human nature in its deepest depravity, and sends souls into eternity in teeming crowds, with lies not only in their right hands, but enveloping them like a garment.

The soul enlightened from on high, convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, will not long be held by a religion of form. You may please a hungry child with toys for a little, but as the hunger grows more clamorous and imperative, nothing but substantial bread will do. So none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. He is the bread of life. and nothing but a personal reception of him, by faith, can satisfy the hunger of the soul. It is a real feast, not a mere picture of one, to which he invites us. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, is the sure forerunner of that blessed state, where we are filled with the fulness of God, and where we shall awake in His likeness.

Much of the blessings of Christianity lie in the future, for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" but real and imper-

ishable blessings are now in the Christian's possession. He is now God's Son, and prayer is speaking to his Father; repentance is returning to his Father; faith is resting on the love of his Father; and when he looks up to those heavens that seem to roof in our earth, and sees the myriads of stars that gleam in the darkness of night, his soul is thrilled with the thought of the vastness of his Father's possessions.

One who rejoices in God in this relation, longs to bring all wanderers back to their Father. The heart touched by God's love, loves others; just as the iron that has felt the power of the magnet, becomes itself magnetic.

We see this in the Apostle John. Love was the very soul of his religion, the element in which he lived, the glory of his teaching and the charm of his society. We have heard of the sculptor, who seeing a rough, unhewn block of marble exclaimed, "What a glorious statue dost thou conceal!" So the Christian looks upon the lowest, most degraded of human beings, and sees one capable of being made a child of God, an heir of heaven, a companion of angels. He knows that the roughest block of humanity can, by the Holy Spirit, be made into the likeness of Christ; and for this he prays and labors.

The Apostle, while rejoicing in his present privileges, looked forward to something greater. A rich man may adopt into his family a poor beggar boy picked up off the streets. He may have him washed, and dressed, and educated, and may permit him to call him father, and leave him all his property; but there is one thing he cannot do, he cannot give him his nature, he cannot impart to him his own likeness. But when God adopts us into his family through Jesus, he makes us partakers of his own nature, and impresses us with his image. Men take notice that we have been with Jesus. The spirit and the temper of the Holy One shines out, somewhat imperfectly no doubt, but still so as to show the Divine relationship that has been formed.

That which will so greatly add to the bliss of heaven is, that this likeness will be perfect. No sinful passion shall ever again fill the soul with sorrows and remorse. We shall do

good without sin being present with us, and the song of grateful love shall gush forth uninterrupted by a single improper thought or feeling. Oh, blessed hope! The hope of being like Jesus! How it should ennoble our lives now! We should seek to be of one mind with God, hating what he hates, loving what he loves, judging of things by his standard, to be meek, loving, gentle and unselfish, as was the blessed Saviour. We should stand up bold and unflinching witnesses, as he was, and stooping to any work, however lowly, that he may do good to others. Think of being *like* Jesus and *with* Jesus forever. We have known many happy moments with Jesus and his people on earth, but they do not last. Sin comes like a great pall of darkness, and separates between God and us. But yonder eternity will be the crown of our glory. If we could look forward millions of ages and yet see an end to our enjoyment, it would cast a damp upon our bliss, a dark shadow over our brightness. But forever with the Lord, and forever like the Lord. Oh, what wondrous love is this? To live as long as God lives, and with his mighty love overflowing in our hearts, and all for nothing, all of grace, free grace; surely if we can resist all this, and give up our powers to the love of the world, we can expect nothing but to hear, when we enter eternity, that terrible blast of condemnation, "Depart, ye cursed!"

A man who had been born blind had his eyes operated upon by a skillful oculist, so that he could gradually see objects around him. For the first time he looked upon the faces of his wife and children, his own face beaming with love. At last he exclaimed, "Oh, why have I seen these first before enquiring for him whose skill opened my eyes; show me the *doctor!*" Thus the redeemed shall wish first to see Jesus.

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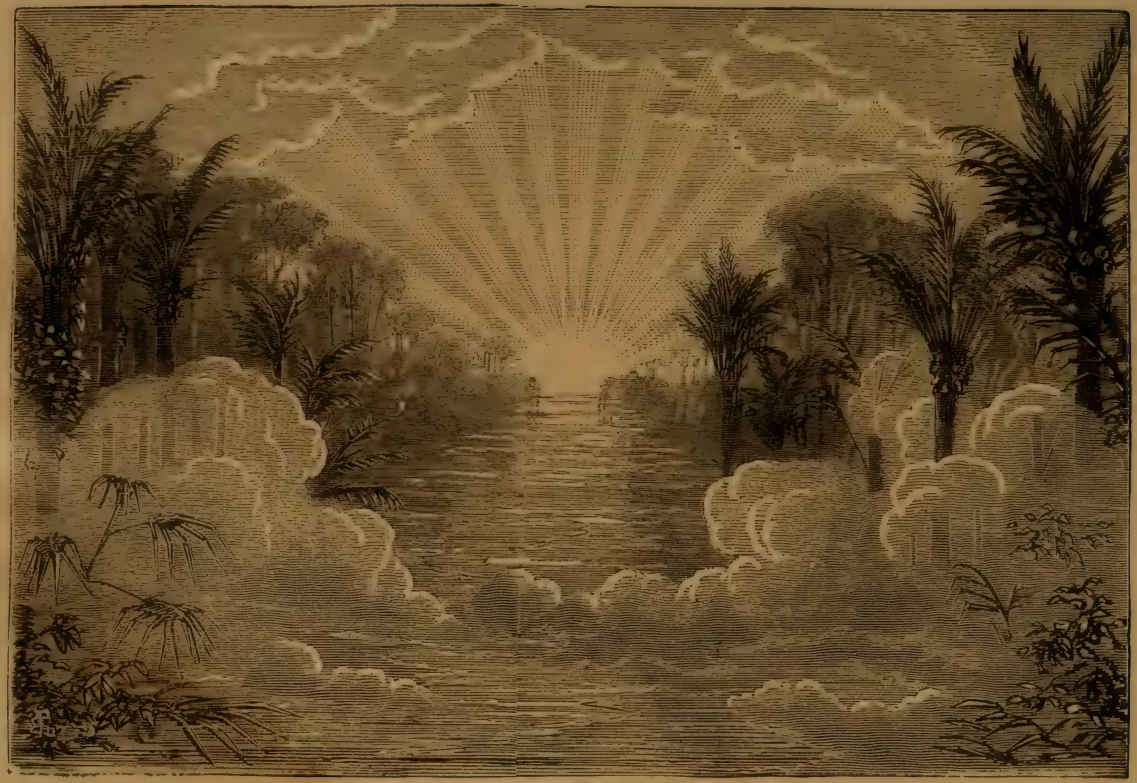
One of the most solemn, most searching, and most humbling questions is that from the lips of our Lord, "Lovest thou me?" It is a deep disgrace to us, a burning shame, that, after all he has done for us, he should still have to ask such a question. No wonder that amid our base ingratitude he causes the awful words

to roll over our heads like a peal of thunder: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be accursed."

Christ's love, as revealed on the Cross, when believed on with the whole heart, is the only power that can sweep the world of its impurities. Wherever it is faithfully preached, it changes the whole aspect of society. Savages hear of it and it lifts them to the dignity of God's children. Idolaters hear of it, and their idol temples are deserted. It humbles the proud, and elevates the humble. It teaches citizens their rights and obligations, and rulers their solemn responsibilities. It emboldens the timid, and renders invincible the brave. It smooths the wrinkles on the brow of care, binds up the broken heart, and dispels despair as it sits brooding over the desolations of the grave. It transforms the slave of passion and sin into Christ's freeman.

The doctrine of Christ crucified penetrates into the haunts of vice in our cities, where misery in its most hideous forms appals the heart of the beholder; and instantly there is a great change. It goes into the cell of the criminal whose soul is stained with crimes which no heart, undebased by deepest villainy, could even conceive of, and it melts his hard heart into tender contrition. Amid the roar of battle it comes to the dying soldier, giving him a peace that is unspeakable and full of glory. It comes to the sailor amid the shriek of the midnight tempest, when his proud ship is cast a naked hulk on the boundless deep, or when the rocks are strewn with the fragments of her perishing strength, and enables him to cast the anchor of his hope within the vail. In short, it comes to every human heart that will receive it, and imparts a confidence that can never be shaken, world without end.

A lady when dying heard some of her friends say in a whisper, "She is sinking fast," when she opened her eyes and said, "How can I sink through a rock!" She felt that she was resting on The Rock of Ages. All who are not on that rock are on the shifting sand, which the storms of judgment will sweep from under them. Reader, many voices unite to urge you to come to Christ. The eternal Father says, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." The Holy Spirit urges you to Christ, on the peril of



THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE.

your precious soul. Conscience lifts up its awful voice and calls you to flee from the wrath to come. The voices of loving ones, who have often prayed for you on earth, in tender memories from the eternity into which they have gone, urge you to come to the Saviour they love. A great cloud of witnesses encompass you around, and by the most tremendous motives urge you to a happy decision; and I now entreat you to come at once to our adorable Redeemer—the WORLD'S HOPE.

# BENEDICTION.

Let us then join in the chorus of the heavenly throng: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessings."

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever."

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